
Paul Eirene, C.Ss.R.

AN Adventist AND A Catholic

*or
Two Friends
on Two Different Ships*





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An Adventist *AND A Catholic*

or

Two Friends
On Two Different Ships

So Pilate said to him,
"Then you are a king?"
Jesus answered, "You say I
am a king. For this I was
born and for this I came
into the world, to testify to
the truth. Everyone who
belongs to the truth listens
to my voice." Pilate said to
him, "What is truth?"

Jn 18:37-38

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Before you turn the page

Heart of origins

"Enough about Jehovah's Witnesses", I thought to myself when I discovered how little literature exists about the Seventh Day Adventists.

My friend, I do not want you to think that there is no need to write about Jehovah's Witnesses, I am just saying that there's enough literature about them. It is fairly exhausting and in the end their teaching is such nonsense, that it does not take too much effort to upheave it, rather, we need to prove the psychological reasons for the spread of their sect.

The matter is different with the Adventists. There is very little literature about them; next to none. It took me a long time to look for it in Catholic stores in Italy, Canada and the USA. I found next to nothing. The one or two books that I did find about them, dealt mainly with those errors of their teachings that are common to other Protestants.

Through God's providence, I met with the teachings of Adventists at boarding-school during my early years as a college student in the former Czechoslovakia. It was through my friend Thomas (that is what I'll call him), who eventually became a member of that church.

We met while playing chess. Frequently he joined in stormy debates about religion, debates that took place in my room from time to time. Since this was in the era of

communist totality, we usually argued about the existence of God. Right from start, Thomas let it be known that according to him, God must exist, something which cooled down the other participants in the discussion.

At school, Thomas and I spiritually understood each other the best — there was only one thing in which we started to differ very soon: the outlook of the Catholic Church. The first few dialogues with Thomas about faith went by in an open atmosphere, but by the time Thomas returned from a weekend at home, that atmosphere disappeared. Even though Thomas was never baptized, in his hometown he had contacts with Adventists, who, after mentioning his friendship with me, began arming him with arguments against the Catholic Church. If I were unable to answer his prepared arguments instantaneously, it was proof enough that the Catholic Church was a false church and incapable of an answer. When I was able to quote arguments written in the Bible, I was not always able to quote the exact place where the statement could be found, although I was sure it was in the Bible. After all, my whole life I went to church and listened to the readings from the Bible and how the Catholic Church explained it.

I was aghast at the primitive idea of the Catholic Church that the Adventists were feeding him; one could see that the Adventists were drawing the Church in the blackest of colors.

In the beginning, when I took the time and effort to find the proper verse from the Bible and showed it to him, he refused to listen and began with arguments against other subjects. If he received the answer from the Bible to that also, he went to yet another subject. Since he was not able to orientate himself too well in the questions of doctrine, all arguments ended up with the sinfulness of the Catholic Church. That is where he felt

most comfortable. On average all our debates, as if they were in a funnel, turned into arguments about the sinfulness of the Church. There were times when the chirps of the early birds found us deeply in a debate.

After the first phase of his self-conscious statements, Thomas realized that the Catholic Church was no little child, who clams up after the first question. That did not mean that he would begin to examine the Catholic teachings without prejudices. The Church remained too tarnished in his eyes.

I admired in him his effort to find the truth, even though I saw that Satan had been successful in barricading the correct access to it. At one time, he confessed to me that he studied the Bible very intensely for a week thinking that he would be able to enlighten himself by extreme immersion. Instead he became sick and needed to recuperate and relax for two weeks afterwards. He did not succeed, because without the teaching office of the Catholic Church, no-one can do it alone. Satan knows this also. If Protestants were able to pick up Catholic books, even with the intention of finding errors in them, and were able to read them seriously, they would not remain Protestant for long. They are more than willing to pick up and read books of other Protestant churches, but Catholic literature is "forbidden" territory to them. As a result they talk of the Catholic Church only in terms of what others say about it, and not that which they themselves learned.

It was the same with Thomas. Even though we continued to live in residence in the same room, in our future years at college, and Documents from the Second Vatican Council and other Catholic books were in plain view and within arm's reach, Thomas only looked at them a few times and then he never touched them again. I realized that it was "a hard saying" for him. After our

years of studies ended we each went our separate ways.

Shortly after compulsory time with the army, like a lightning bolt from heaven, God showed his plan for me. The entire knowledge and decision to offer my life to him could be counted in seconds. I entered into a religious order and began studying to become a priest. All this was done in secrecy, illegally, because religious orders were forbidden and studies at the theological faculty were forbidden even to those who had a college or university education. I left my profession and looked for employment that would allow me the most time to study. The boiler room in a hotel offered me the most free time. Thus, with God's guidance, I was paid to study theology. There, in the boiler room, is where the main part of this work was written. Only a few close friends and interested people knew of my studies and secret ordination to the priesthood. Not even my friend, Thomas, with whom I still exchanged letters, was aware of any of this.

Central pillar of the Adventists

Through my long friendship with Thomas and especially after his last letter to me, I came to understand what the main pillar of their teaching is.

It is SATURDAY.

Even if someone suggested that this seemed an obvious conclusion, because it comes from their actual name **Seventh-Day** Adventists — it is not that apparent.

Why?

First of all the word “Adventists”, which historically came first, is in the foreground. Secondly, in their name there is no reference to Saturday but to the “seventh day”.

Proof of this is also the fact that the little bit of Catholic literature only very minutely argues against Saturday. In other words, it underestimates how much weight the Adventists put on Saturday in spreading their denomination. I followed their programs and their books while in Canada. I noticed that all the arches of their theological errors fall back to the *pillar of Saturday*.

In the background of all their presentations hangs an unspoken sentence: “We have the strongest, the most invincible theological argument against the Catholic Church”.

In the consciousness of all Protestants is a certain knowledge, that the Catholic Church has some answer to the objections of the Protestant, even though, they think it is incorrect. But in the case of the Adventists, there's a self-consciousness, which can be explained this way: “We are the ones who have finally convicted the Catholic Church of heresy. Look, she does not even keep the Ten Commandments. They do not keep Saturday holy, which is mentioned there”.

As to their teachings about the second coming (*adventus*) of Jesus Christ, it does not warrant any special attention, since they already prophesied the year in which the end of the world was to be (1844), and their prophesy crashed. Besides that, their teaching of the second coming of Jesus Christ is exactly what the Catholic Church has taught with one difference: the Catholic Church does not predict the exact date of the end of the world.

Publishing of this book

The form of this book has been one of the main reasons why the publishing has been extended. Even though it was the intention to make it non-personal, it was not possible, unless it was compromised by a “dry” apology towards Adventists. That would be a totally different book, which still needs to be written, but we would lose many benefits of the form used here.

The main advantage is that there is something “live” here. This book is not some dry theological treatise, but it presents the problem actualized in real persons. People want to see that religion has contact with everyday life and touches the person.

Further advantages flow from higher levels.

Arguments against the Catholic Church are given “live”, as they are presented in real-life situations, not diplomatically. Before the official forum, the churches try to be civil toward each other, and be very tactful; “at home”, they openly discuss what they think of others. That is what it is like here too. Besides, there’s no barrier which may surface between a priest and a lay person, since Thomas had no idea that his friend was a priest and belonged to an order. Thus, spontaneous argument

against the Catholic Church has no barrier of an official forum or any consideration on the priest. Defence of Saturday and objections against the Catholic Church are put forth in such a manner and in such strength as one uses in real-life. To a believing Catholic, such presented arguments might have a shocking effect. Nevertheless, that is good, because whoever reads further, will see that the Catholic Church should have no fears of any arguments, and the truth, which the Catholic Church proclaims by Christ's empowerment, will survive all attacks.

The history of the Adventists

The founder of the new era Adventism was a farmer and (from the year 1833) baptist preacher William Miller (1782-1849), who, using the Bible, calculated that the second coming of Christ would be October 22, 1844. Since the end of the world did not materialize at the time, there was great disappointment. In spite of this, in January 1845, with his followers, he left the religious community of Baptists and created a new sect, having at the center of its dogma the near second coming of the Lord. They called themselves ADVENTISTS (*Adventus Domini* — Coming of the Lord). Later the Adventists divided into five branches, all of them holding a common belief in the early coming of the Lord and baptizing adults by total immersion.

Nowadays, only the Seventh-day Adventists are of major significance. They derive their origins from Mrs. P. Preston, the Seventh Day Baptist, who, under the spiritual leadership of the Adventist preacher James White and his wife Ellen G. White (nee Harmon), together with a ship's captain, Joseph Bates, Joshua Himes and Hiram Edson gave her congregation the official name THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS.

Even though Ellen G. White is only one of the founders, in reality, Adventists consider her as the spiritual foundation of their church. They themselves confirm that "her influence shaped the Seventh-day Adventist Church more than any other factor except the Holy Bible". Adventists believe that she was gifted by the spirit of prophecy and, since 1844 when she was 17 years old, until 1915 when she died, she had more than 2,000 revelations. She was known as the "Lord's ambassador", which she also seemed to have received through inspiration.

Adventist church government is based on democratic principles. Each local church is governed congregationally but belongs to a state conference, which appoints its minister. Four or more conferences comprise a union conference and several union conferences make up a division. World headquarters have been in Washington, D.C. since 1903. The world leader of the Seventh-day Adventists is president Neal Wilson. There are more than 9.7 million Seventh-day Adventists worldwide, of whom 860,000 live in North America (data from 1997). In 1906 the Adventists reported 26,799 members in the U.S.; in 1964 the number reached 335,765. Adventists are one of the fastest growing Protestant denominations in the world today adding one new member every 44 seconds of every day and organizing five new congregations daily. The total number of churches is over 43,000.

It should be mentioned that there is now a new sect of Adventists, one that agrees with the fact that you need to keep holy the day when Christ rose from the dead, but according to their biblical calculations, that day was on a Saturday and not Sunday.

Color of this book

The green color of this book is not coincidental. I chose it in consideration to my friend Thomas. It was his color.

After the end of school, we only met a few times. The last time was at the class reunion 20 years later. When we walked on the terrace of the restaurant in the early hours of the morning, he told me how God worked in his life and how God's providence drove him. I believed him, after all. God loves every person and directs his life. I felt, that he could not see, even remotely, that this could be so with Catholics, that he has no concept of what joy it is to have fullness of truth and certainty of belief, which is only possible within the Catholic Church.

Not long ago there was a book published in the West, a book dealing with eleven converts, many of whom were even Protestant pastors. What a surprise it was to them, when they found the truth in the Catholic Church. Even before their conversion, they loved and were looking for the truth. They believed in Jesus Christ, their personal Lord and Saviour. They believed in the inspiration of the Bible, but on the other hand, they were tormented by the question of how to be certain that their explanation of the Bible was the right one. They could not explain to themselves how the true Church of Christ could be represented by so many mutually opposing (in question of doctrine) Protestant denominations. After finding the Catholic Church, they proclaimed in one voice and with surprise: "We have finally come home"; "Here, we have found the fullness of the truth and the means for salvation"; "The Catholic Church, which we thought was the least biblical, is actually the most biblical".

My friend, a hungry person is happy if he finds even a small crust of bread. Now, can you compare that crust

with a wedding feast? If an upright person finds a "crust" of Catholic teachings in a Protestant church, he is happy. But what is that compared to the fullness which is in the Catholic Church?

That is what matters to me. If it matters to you too, I ask you to pray three Hail Marys for God's light for my friend Thomas.

The Objections of the Adventists against Catholics

(Expressed by one of them)

January 31

Dear Paul,

Many greetings to you. I received your letter and wanted to write to you but somehow I was never able to find enough time to do it in peace. You see, I can only do things that require a lot of thinking when the kids are asleep: that is at night. And I am usually too tired and have no desire to write at that time. But, back to your letter. I'll try to answer your questions first, hopefully in the order you asked them.

You write that it hurts you, that we do not understand each other and that it seems to hurt me a lot less. You come to that conclusion because I do not write in my letters anything about this and I do not try to persuade you or tell you that you're wrong. At the boarding-school, we discussed a lot of things, but now when I look back, I realize that those discussions were not conducted properly. We argued about certain things, which can be twisted and turned this way and that, and yet we never clarified *basic things*, basic truths — which can be crystal clear even to a child. I wrote to you about this in

my last letter. Surely you remember it. It deals with divine law — the Ten Commandments. You have not responded to that letter. Why? I purposely did not write about anything else in that letter. Even in this letter you avoided this question. I wrote to you, that the Catholic Church does not believe in all the Ten Commandments.

She let go of the second commandment, changed the fourth commandment and split the tenth commandment into two (just to make sure that there will be ten in the end even without the second one).

I wrote to you that the Catholic Church seems to think it has the right to change even God's commandments (you even told me that yourself and you even knowingly acknowledge that). Thus the Church is an even greater authority (for you) than the Lawmaker Himself — God — and to this I have nothing else to add. And so, you also stand before a decision as to who you will obey (who you will believe more) whether the Catholic Church (or more precisely the commandments of the people) or God Himself. These facts were in my last letter, and I can't see what else I can do, no matter how much it bothers me that you go astray. The decision is yours alone — after all, you know the truth. As long as you maintain these attitudes about the Divine law, any other discussions are pointless.

Quotes from the Bible about the eternal and unchangeable validity of God's law, the Ten Commandments, are many. Here are just a few of them:

God Himself certified it *personally* (in His own hand) as with His own finger He wrote ten of His (God's) commandments (moral law) on Mount Sinai onto two stone tablets (a sign of endurance) and gave them to Moses — he even did this a second time after Moses broke the first set.

On the first tablet the first four commandments deal with the relationship of man to God. They totally fulfill the commandment: You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind...

On the other tablet are six more commandments which deal with the relationship of man to man and they comprehensibly fulfill the commandment: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

About the validity of divine law, read the following texts: Mt 5:17-18; Jn 14:21; Mt 7:21; 1 Jn 2:3-4; 1 Jn 3:4; Lk 16:17; Acts 24:14; Rom 3:31.

You can also find the Ten Commandments in the second Book of Moses, chapter 20. You can easily verify their text with that which one finds in your catechisms (how can you explain the differences to me?).

We are justified by faith, but the true faith is shown by acknowledging and by keeping God's precepts in their entirety. To save ourselves *we must change ourselves* and not God's law.

According to Jesus' words, if we break one commandment we therefore break all Commandments — all ten of them.

You once told me that Saturday is Jewish — only pertaining to Jews.

However, the sabbatical commandment (the fourth one) is not only for the Jews, it has been valid since the beginning of the world. God Himself rested on the seventh day; He blessed it and sanctified it (1 Moses 2:2-3). Thus, Saturday, as well as the seven-day week, comes from paradise — it is a remembrance of creation. Moreover, the Ten Commandments were issued (repeated) simultaneously, — why then do you not see them all as Jewish, too? Also, Saturday has been observed before

the Jews as a nation began to exist (Jews began from Sem — Son of Noah — thus the term Semites).

Jesus Himself observed Saturday as holy, as did the Apostles. Nowhere is there any mention of this being terminated or changed. Jesus also says that He is the Lord even over Saturday — the Lord over all Commandments.

From all this it is clear that you and the whole Catholic Church are in contradiction of the Divine Law. I can't understand and am flabbergasted as to where your "serene certainty of faith" comes from, when I see that even you do not recognize the Ten Commandments as they appear. I can only surmise: whoever does not want to believe in the truth, will believe in lies — after all, everyone must believe in something. Read 2 Thes 2:11 (and even the entire chapter) carefully. I have met many people with the same "certainty" in questions of faith, and yet they believe many heresies (for example, Jehovah's Witnesses). In the Catholic Church it is not difficult to have such "serene certainty of faith", for there are others (the priests) who think for the individual members of the church. And they are the ones that have a "patent" on the Holy Spirit and thus infallibility. And that is the reason the individual members of the church do not study the Bible and do not know it. They cannot verify anything themselves.

I often meet with Catholics, simple members, and every day I can observe the "fruits" of the state. Again I repeat to you: "False religion bears false life." Please excuse my openness, but what I write is the naked reality. I hope that as an old friend, you won't be offended.

Furthermore, you ask me whether I believe the teachings of the church of the Adventists. The answer is: yes, I believe and I have no doubts about my convictions. (Moreover, to be honest, I went over the entire points of

our church once again, before I wrote you).

Nobody is born with the knowledge of truth. To find truth takes a lot of energy.

I do not want to say that I know everything, or that I am a better believer than you are, I just want to say that *I know who and what I believe in.*

In order to understand particular truths, one must study the Scripture, the word of God. *Jesus Himself calls us to study and to verify if that is the way things are, because that is in the Scripture that we find life eternal and the Scripture testifies of God.* In it we find God's revelation about Himself. (Jn 5:39; Lk 24:27; Acts 17:11). It is upon this searching of the Scripture that man uses reason, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit receives the conviction about things which cannot be seen — faith. Look at the definition of faith of the Apostle Paul (Heb 11:1).

Whosoever does not know the word of God and does not guide himself by it *goes astray* — see Mk 12:24!!!!

Here we find a substantial difference between your church and ours. The Catholic Church follows the Scripture only in part — it holds tradition as equal authority. Tradition and customs of people, this is a very wide concept and has nothing in common with the first Christian church — look in the Book of Acts of the Apostles — that is actually the history of the first Christian church.

As well, you do not follow the Scripture alone, but from the time you were born, you blindly believe what others have told you to believe. And just like every other Catholic, you were brought up with the mentality that you do not have to think about all this. You do not look at the Holy Scripture as the supreme authority, but you believe man is. On top of that, you amaze me how much you contradict yourself. You write: "...if you want to

express belief in God, you must first believe in man. Which man?" According to you, I am to find this out with my own reason.

And now, I ask you: "How do you learn that with your own reason?" I have met many people of different churches and each one of them claims that he is right. Under what criteria am I to find out who is telling the truth and who is telling a little bit of truth mixed with lies. And where does the truth stop and a lie begin, when everyone tells me things, which according to you I cannot verify. That is a dead end street and the basic error. Why did you not believe the Jehovah's? On what basis are you a Catholic? On the basis that you were born into a Catholic family? How many people growing up in atheist families have been baptized in their adult life into Catholicism? If the Catholic church did not baptize small children, how many of the same people would be baptized in their adult life?

Without Scripture, you cannot distinguish between the truth and a lie.

Jesus himself at the time of temptation, *when everything was at stake*, defended Himself against Satan: "*It is written...*"

However, I do believe the people who wrote the Scripture. They were personally with God themselves, they lived their lives with Jesus personally. And for what reason am I to believe other people who do not give us truth that agrees with the first writers — the Apostles? By what right, for example, does your priest or your Pope teach the church and explain to you the Gospel differently from the first people — writers? After all, the Holy Scripture is the sum of books, which were written by God's men, those who lived great things with God.

Thus the people who are sent by Jesus in our times

must be in agreement with the people who were sent in his lifetime; *their doctrine must be 100% congruent with the Scripture*. This truth is so clear that everyone can easily understand it.

So we actually verify each and every teaching of any religious doctrine according to its congruency with the Holy Scripture, which is not like a man, which does not change, just like God's truth and God Himself is unchangeable.

The Scripture and the Scripture alone, is the supreme criterion of truth. We explain the Scripture by the Scripture.

And the reason that we have so many different churches is that most people do not follow this basic rule. Satan works primarily against the authority of the Scripture. He knows all too well, that if the authority of the Scripture falls in the eyes of men, then "all the doors are open to all sort of lies. And thus, without the authority of the Scripture, people cannot distinguish truth from lies and they believe all sorts of stories and heresies.

The true faith lifts and strengthens man. In the life of a believer, one must be able to see its fruits (good fruits), nevertheless, blind faith is fanaticism — it degrades man.

In other words, in the question of your salvation, you rely on other people.

In such serious matters, where one deals with salvation, it is wrong to let others do your thinking for you. *Before God, every one will have to account for himself*. The Lord Jesus' command: "*Search the Scripture...*", is valid for everyone not just the priests. And it is exactly this command that the majority of Catholics do not respect and the church does not lead them to this either. It is simpler that way and does not take too much exertion. And that is Satan's goal, to avert people from the Scripture and support customs and tradition, false

images of God and to kill true spiritual life .

I am going on and on without an end. When we next meet, we will be able to discuss more.

In conclusion, you invite me to join the Catholic Church and you offer me "certainty in matter of faith" and "certainty that my sins have been forgiven". It occurs to me at this time who the words of the Lord were meant for, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." Surely this goes for "believers".

Do not take this the wrong way, but the Catholic Church cannot possibly give me that which you are offering and I am amazed that you still ignore the many heresies that the Catholic Church has compiled throughout the centuries and you cannot see the results (fruits) of this in the past and at present. And Jesus says that a tree is known by its fruit... Do you believe that I can gain, for instance, plenary indulgences and my sins will be forgiven? *Not me!* Do you believe that many "souls" of believers will suffer in Purgatory before they enter into heaven? *Not me!* My Saviour died for me too, and He says that He has paid for my sins and for all who believe in Him. So, no suffering, no salvation by one's own suffering, one's own works etc. Man receives salvation **for free** because *God is love. Man cannot merit it in any way!!!!*

In conclusion, I do not want to convince you to come into our church, but in all fairness, as a friend, I advise you to read the Scripture and evaluate your faith *in its light, and in its light alone. Know the truth and the truth will set you free.* If you write me back, please answer my questions.

Your friend, Thomas

P. S. I have been signed out — I will be home for the next eight days. As you know, we have moved into larger quarters. We enjoy living here. The children are growing fast — they are in kindergarten now. If you are in town, please stop in for a visit. Thank you for your greetings.

Adventists

Hi Thomas!

As you can see, I am ~~just~~ now replying to your letter from January. I started writing right away, but it took me three-four months and then my letter has been laying on my desk for a few more months. I have finally returned to it and have no idea how long it will take until I rewrite everything and also add to it. Today is July 21, but that is not important. It is just an explanation.

I would like to make this letter a continuation of our dialogue.

But first, if you allow me (even if you're not, it doesn't matter, since I am writing), I would like to think about the word "dialogue" and then review the situation of thinking. I am sure you will find this a bit of a "sickness" we have in common.

So, DIALOGUE!

If we take it literally, the word "dialogue" is composed of two words: DIA — *two*, *between*, *and* — LOGOS — *word*.

From this nominal definition, we come to a conclusion, which would be: *to communicate via a word, to understand each other through words in exchange what the word*

The answer to the objections of the Adventists

Hi Thomas!

As you can see, I am just now replying to your letter from January. I started writing right away, but it took me three-four months and then my letter has been laying on my desk for a few more months. I have finally returned to it and have no idea how long it will take until I rewrite everything and also add to it. Today is July 21, but that is not important, it is just an explanation.

I would like to make this letter a continuation of our dialogue.

But first, if you allow me (even if you do not, it doesn't matter, since I am writing), I would like to think about the word "dialogue" and thus relieve my sickness of thinking. I am sure you will forgive me, after all, it is a "sickness" we have in common.

So, DIALOGUE!

If we take it literally, the word "dialogue" is composed of two words: DIA — *by, through, via* and LOGOS — *word*.

From this nominal definition, we come to a conclusion, which would be: *to communicate via a word; to understand each other through word; to exchange ideas via word;*

your own recognition of reality delivered to another via word; to exchange our inner worlds through word...

And this last one perhaps best defines the goal of a dialogue.

Why?

Because only commonly outlived reality can make a man happy.

Why "only commonly"?

I do not know. Actually so. It is a phenomenon.

A child in a sandbox starts crying when it finds out it is there all by itself. If there is nobody to play with, all the toys in the world are useless.

An ambulance is driving down the street blaring. A child tugs at her mother to look at it. But she has her own worries. The ambulance speeds by and goes out of sight, and the child, all upset, says: "You did not see it!"

Would the child see more if the mother saw it as well?

No.

Why was it necessary to the child's happiness to have someone else see and live through it?

This is the same with adults, even though they try to hide that fact.

Who enjoys going on vacation by himself? Happiness and success of a vacation do not rest on the place where you had spent it in as much as who you spent it with. If we see something beautiful, we are sad if we have no one to tell it to and to share it with. Even the tough moments in our life turn into joyful ones if someone understands our grief and lives through it with us.

Even the most fantastic natural sceneries without "YOU" are boring, and the most trifle things with "YOU"

are fantastic.

That's the mystery of a *person*.

The living out of one reality in common by two persons equals happiness.

How interesting is the mystery of the Holy Trinity from this point of view! Three persons live out the same reality of their Divine Being and do it so perfectly that each person in the Trinity can call it its own. And since this reality is absolute (that is God), their blessedness from living it out is absolute too. Three Persons, but one God.

Hence, the goal of a dialogue is reaching a common living out of a reality, in our case, Thomas, the reality revealed by God.

And even though our knowing, our acquaintance here on earth is limited and consequently the final happiness reached from it is limited too, nevertheless, it is a foreshadowing and a condition of that happiness which awaits us in the presence of three divine Persons.

What are the dangers on the road to this goal? What is necessary to the route a dialogue must take to make sure that two persons see a reality in the same way? Since only what is seen in the same way can be lived out commonly.

The first condition for enabling a dialogue is truthfulness, truthfulness from both sides. If someone tries to tell another something which he himself does not see then they have nothing to live out in common. A dialogue, then, is wasted here.

If the condition of truthfulness is met, then there could still be other problems.

The carrier of immaterial idea (concept) is a physical word which is quite an imperfect mean.

Why?

There is a great deal of things (realities) which we can reach by our senses (moon, knife, heat, whistle, stench...) but there's a much greater number of things (beings) which are out of reach of the senses (atom, x-rays, love, happiness, faith, angel, God... and in this age, also Cicero, Alexander the Great...).

Each reality during the process of knowing leaves a "picture" in the mind of a person; an "imprint", an "image" — a CONCEPT. And if a person thinks, then in his thinking he is actually "talking" to himself *directly* by means of these concepts (images). If however, one wants to share this with someone else, then problems arise. Problems, because he cannot talk to others directly by means of those concepts. If he wants someone to have in his/her mind the same "image" as he has, he cannot physically "pour" it into that person's head. He must "label" his concept by a physical voice, written, or signed word (that is to say "incarnated" word), which one can perceive through the senses and so, *indirectly*, through word (dia-logos), to come to know the image of the same reality.

There are, however, considerably fewer words than concepts, thus we must use one word for more than one concept and this causes a lot of misunderstanding, suspicions, lack of confidence... We, thus, often use the same words with our partner, but each derives a different meaning from them and thus each imagines something different from them.

Each of us grows up in a different environment, which often causes the same words to mean different, even opposite things to each of us, even though we speak the same language. To sum up, to analyze our words, is not a simple task. Sometimes it seems impossible. It has

been striking me, Thomas, that to clarify our concepts may be the hardest job on earth. But then, God did not put us here on earth for anything other than to seek the truth. And He says: "Everyone who seeks, finds".

One is tempted by impatience at a difficult task, the more so here. How often does he get into a situation where he asks himself:

1) Either we misunderstand each other because, even though both of us have the good will to find the truth and we use the same language, in the best of circumstance, we each derive a different idea from them or some of them, or

2) the other person has no interest in the dialogue, he is two-faced, he is not on the level, his pride does not allow him to be open to the truth.

How do we find out if the reason is the first or the second one?

In day to day life, we accept the second opinion more readily. And in many cases, this assumption is the correct one, nevertheless in many cases it is wrong. In that case we would make a liar out of someone; we would rob him of his honour, and with the same act, of the biggest possession one can possess. We would become thieves.

So my question is, when may we take into consideration the second possibility?

I insist that only when we have a moral certitude about that. We can only have that certitude when in the speech of the other person we see clear contradiction. The contradiction must be as obvious as the fact that two plus two does not make three. In all other cases, the second alternative is only more or less probable. However, when it comes to such a serious matter as the honour of a man, we cannot rely on probabilities.

So, Thomas, I can see the first dangerous cliff in this one. The second connects with the first one — as ultimately everything is connected with everything — but it has its own peculiarity.

Even if the debate starts out in a good faith, eventually we begin to think that the other alternative is being deployed and that the other person is not taking us seriously and wants to make a fool out of us.

And so this is the dangerous cliff.

Its name is IRONY or SARCASM.

Theoretically there should be no problem, because sarcasm and love of your neighbour do not even come close to each other. But in practice, it is not so simple.

If you come to a conclusion using an incorrect opinion in the beginning of the reasoning, that conclusion then, sounds comical, ironic without wanting to sound that way and without the intention of making a fool out of someone. I am certain that it is not possible to avoid some irony in a dialogue, since that form points to an error in the fastest and clearest way. And if we try to avoid this form, I think, we would have to be silent about the vast majority of problems, or to address them only from a great distance, consequently very unclearly, lest our arguments sound ironic and one takes them as an offense against his own person.

So in that case dialogue would not be possible, because whoever loves his "I" more than the truth, will always take every argument against his point of view as irony, that is an attack against his own person and each debate will only provoke him. We can see this in the Pharisees — they were bursting with anger after their talk with Jesus. Jesus certainly did not mean to talk to them in such a way as to evoke their anger.

It is from this point of view that I mean to write to you. I do not want to skirt around matters, and only gently touch upon subjects, in order not to complicate matters and blur what I mean to say, but on the other hand, as much as possible, I want to get rid of the spots, in which ironic form is not necessary or its stings are too sharp.

I have this thought in mind, but I'm not sure if I will do it. I believe, nevertheless, that you have a good will.

I am not writing this reflection in terms that I would suppose all the mentioned faults in you, but to clarify my point of view and to avoid misunderstandings as much as possible.

So let us look at the subject!

You have fixed the main problem:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS *and specifically* **SATURDAY**

You state that the Catholic Church does not even follow the Ten Commandments, how then, can she claim to be the true Church?

What can I say?

First, maybe the fact that each Scripture, even the one used by the Adventists, is divided into two parts: The Old and New Covenant.

Thus, if the Old Testament is "old", there must be something old in it, and by the same token, in the New Testament, there must be something new. Otherwise, the words "old" and "new" would be senseless.

The Old Covenant has been contracted by the Lord and his people through his servant Moses on Mount Sinai. It was ratified by the blood of animals of sacrifices.

When every commandment had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves [and goats], together with water and crimson wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying: "This is 'the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you'".

Heb 9:19-20

And this same God, Incarnated Word (Jn 1:14) who

made His dwelling among us contracted out with His new people (cf. Mt 21:43; Tim 2:14) the New Covenant at the last Supper when He said:

"Take, eat; this is my body". And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins".

Mt 26:26-28

But a covenant is only a covenant when both sides promise to keep the commitment. From God's side there are promises and from the side of the people there are commandments. We see that Moses proclaimed *"every commandment ... according to the law"*. Yes, it is true that God personally wrote ten of them *"with His own hand"* into the rock tablets — understandably, because they were of particular importance — but that does not change the fact that they had to follow all the commandments without exception, not just the Ten Commandments.

If you are not careful to observe every word of the law which is written in this book... Lord... will smite you and your descendants with severe and constant blows, malignant and lasting maladies".

Dt 28:58-59

This first covenant with its precepts is the preparation for the coming of Christ and His teachings.

Before faith came, we were held in custody under law... Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ.

Gal 3:23-24

- Under the word “law” the New Testament Books usually mean the Old Covenant. It comes from the context.
- If we *were* held in custody under the law, which, by its commandments, represented to us the “guardians and administrators” (cf. Gal 4:2), that means that now we are not and that mound of ceremonial rules (including food) does not apply to us any more. They applied to Jews. At the time before Christ, before the fullness of God’s revelation, they surely had a meaning.

as long as the heir is not of age... he is under the supervision of guardians and administrators until the date set by his father.

Gal 4:1-2

For Christ is the end of the law.

Rom 10:4

The law and the prophets lasted until John; but from then on the Kingdom of God is proclaimed.

Lk 16:16

The coming of Christ and his teachings was prepared in the Old Testament in such a way that God began to show Himself slowly at first and eventually more and more and also that He prophesied Christ’s coming and His teachings, not only in words (that is by lips of the prophets) but also in deeds. That means that things or historical events foreshadowed realities of the New Testament. For instance:

Old	New
Unblemished Paschal Lamb (Ex 12:5)	Jesus Christ
The Jews had not broken its bones (12:46)	Not a bone of Christ was broken (Jn 19:36)
Adam	Christ (Rom 5:15)
Melchizedek	Christ's priesthood (Heb 5:10, Ps 110:4)
The Bronze Serpent (Nm 21:9)	Christ on the Cross (Jn 3:14-15)
The Circumcision	Baptism (Col 2:11)
The flight from Egypt	The flight from the devil's slavery
The rest of Jews in the promised land	The heavenly, eternal rest for the children of God accord- ing to God's promises
Moses' rite	The Christian Liturgy (Heb 8:1-13)
The earthly Jerusalem	The heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:24-31)
Jonah was 3 days in the belly of a large fish	Christ was 3 days in the tomb (Mt 12:39)

So, Thomas, when you show me the arguments from the Scripture:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place".

Mt 5:17-18; similarly Lk 16:17

Are we then annulling the law by this faith? Of course not! On the contrary, we are supporting the law.

Rom 3:31

It means, we have to understand them in such a way that we do not get ourselves into a contradiction with the rest of the statements in the Scripture.

Thus when it comes to that which the picture has prefigured, there is no need for the picture anymore. Why does one need the picture when he has the reality?

So if we think of the figures becoming realities, then the Old Testament is not abolished and not a smallest part of a letter has passed of it, but it is "accomplished". Reread again, Mt 5:18, especially the last words. If we think that the figures are not necessary for us anymore, then the Old Testament is abolished.

For example:

Unclean food and drink represented pagan nations with which Jewish people were not allowed to associate. If touched, they had to cleanse themselves. After the death and the resurrection of Christ, when it was necessary to spread the glad tidings to all nations, even this barrier came tumbling down, and along with it the need to separate the foods into clean and unclean. This is evidenced in Acts 10:11ff:

He (Peter) saw heaven opened and something resembling a large sheet coming down, lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all the earth's four-legged animals and reptiles and the birds of the sky. A voice said to him: "Get up, Peter. Slaughter and eat." But Peter said: "Certainly not, sir. For never have eaten anything profane and unclean." The voice spoke to him again, a second time: "What God has made clean, you are not to call profane." This happened three times, and then the object was taken up into the sky. While Peter was in doubt about the meaning of the vision...

Acts 10:11-17

• The figures (preshadowings) of the Old Testament were fully understood only through the New Testament. We see that even Peter himself did not understand the meaning of clean and unclean animals. But then he did understand, because he says:

You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean.

Acts 10:28

and also:

In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.

Acts 10:34-35

And to this I add for you the footnote from our Scripture:

Jews distinguished the clean and unclean foods. By the same token, they considered themselves as clean (especially because of circumcision which was looked upon as cleansing ceremony). The rest of the people, that is pagans, were considered as unclean. Through Peter's vision, God let him know that in the New Testament,

there is no division between clean and unclean foods and no division between people which put them into two groups: Jews and non-Jews. Thus all people can be accepted into the Church without first having to become confessors of Jewish religion and then that of Christian religion. This circumvention would have been a big barrier in the spreading of the church, because Jews were not well liked in any part of the world at that time. From his vision, Peter knew he had received a sign from God to accept pagans directly into the Church without hesitation, and not to ask them to keep the ceremonial law of Jews.

If it had not been so, how could the same Scripture state:

But now we are released from the law, ... so that we may serve in the newness of the spirit and not under the obsolete letter.

Rom 7:6

Drive out the slave woman and her son.

Gal 4:30

• The slave woman" is the Old Testament. Compare Gal 4:24!

Once again I declare to every man who has himself circumcised that he is bound to observe the entire law.

Gal 5:3

• Hence he who is not circumcised is not bound to observe the entire law.

When he speaks of a "new" covenant, he declares the first one obsolete. And what has become obsolete and has grown old is close to disappearing.

Heb 8:13

Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian.

Gal 3:24-25

And now back to our problem! Is also Saturday a foreshadowing?

The Holy Spirit gives us the answer through the Scripture:

Therefore let no one, pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Col 2:16-17

Thus Saturday is only the foreshadower, the shadow of what was to come in Christ.

According to Adventists, Saturday is the exact day that God "rested" after working six days. And from that day on we keep that seventh day holy.

But I ask you: Can God rest? God is after all a Pure Act, an Infinite Action! God cannot work six days and rest on the seventh, He cannot labor, He cannot be tired one day and another day relax because He cannot alternate.

With whom there is no alternation

Jas 1:17

The fact that God is unchangeable does not mean that He is deadingly motionless, but that He is unchangeable just as the infinite Act. He cannot not be the absolute Motion! In that point no change can occur in Him. The simple notion of Jews that after the creation,

God went to rest, is disputed even by Jesus when he replies to Jews' stirring about healing on a sabbath day:

My Father is at work until now, so I am at work". For this reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath...

Jn 5:17-18

Why then, does the Scripture say in another spot:

In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested.

Ex 20:11

Does the Scripture not contradict itself?!

No. Because all this was said as the foreshadowing of things to come. Saturday as the foreshadower became reality when Jesus rested on Saturday in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Adventists believe in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God and so without any more exertion I can say: Here God rested after finishing His work. What in the Old Testament is said figuratively, here it is said substantially. What is not possible for God as God, is possible for God as man.

See, the great mystery of faith!

This is the point!

Nevertheless, let us go further. Let us look at it from another point of view!

You state that the Catholic Church has sinned against God immensely, because instead of keeping Saturday holy, it has picked a different day to keep holy. So what you are actually claiming as the substantial regarding Saturday is the order in which Saturday stands in the week. And you claim that the salvation of man depends on this order (sequence), just as Adam's Eden

was dependent on the tree of knowledge of good and bad. Similarly, as the tree was a trial of obedience, so is the order of a day a "trying rock" for people whether they are faithful to God or not. By this anyone can recognize the children of light and the children of dark. In just such a meaning, Thomas, did you once mention this to me.

Can it hold out in this sense?

What does Jesus say to it?

The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.

Mk 2:27

- "for man" and not for "a sequence in a week"
- Seventh day, that is 24 hours in a week are set aside for man to strengthen his soul and his body, to come closer to God, to get to know Him better, to know His holy will, and thus be strengthened with His word, to fulfill the main commandment of love through the week.
- When Saturday was installed for man, Jesus clearly stated by it that God has not made a privilege of it, by which He would try the people: "The second Eden's tree". I think man is tried enough by having to put up with others' inadequacies, when he has to deal with and overcome temptations of body and devil.

• In just such a spirit the following words of Jesus are said:

They questioned him: "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse Him. He said to them: "Which one of you who has a sheep that falls into a pit on the sabbath will not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep.

Mt 12:10-12

At that time, Jesus was going through a field of grain on the sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him: "See, your disciples are doing what is unlawful to do on the sabbath." He said to them: "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry, how he went into the house of God and ate the bread offering, which neither he nor his companions but only the priests could lawfully eat? Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests serving in the temple violate the sabbath and are innocent? I say to you, something greater than the temple is here. If you knew what this meant, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," you would not have condemned these innocent men.

Mt 12:1-7

- If you could only understand this, you would not be judging the Catholic Church. If you understand this, you would not be saying: "See, the Catholic Church is doing what is unlawful to do!"

Thomas, you pointed out arguments from the Scripture by which you backed the validity of the Old Testament's commandments. I only reacted to two of them. Your further arguments are:

Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.

Jn 14:21

- "my" — means Jesus', not Moses'.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Mt 7:21

• Thomas, the will of God is revealed to us by Jesus. And when the Father once talked to people personally, His words were: *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."* (Mt 17:5, cf. Mk 9:7, Lk 9:35) Even Moses himself says: *"A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen in all that he may say to you. Everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be cut off from the people."* (Acts 3:22-23) Thus the quotes that you use do not support the Old Testament, instead they do the opposite.

He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know Him is to keep His commandments. Whoever says, "I know Him," but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 Jn 2:2-4

• And from this it is also clear that it regards the commandments of Jesus.

But this I do admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors and I believe everything that is in accordance with the law and written in the prophets.

Acts 24:14

• "I believe" and not "fulfill" everything that is in the law.

• "I believe everything" about Christ.

• This one of your quotes I must have missed. I should have quoted it before this, because it goes with the Old Testament. I reacted to the rest of them now, because as I have mentioned with each one of them, they do not have anything in common with the Old Testament commandments.

Hence, the above mentioned quotations dealt with commandments of the New Testament. Now I can add what I purposely left out in the beginning: the commandments of the New Covenant. Just as the Old Covenant had its commandments, so does the New one. Just as Moses proclaimed *"every commandment... to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves (and goats)..."*, so Jesus told His apostles at the last Supper:

I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.

Jn 13:34

And he took... the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Lk 22:19-20

How is it possible, that in such an important act, as the making of the covenant, Jesus only mentions the new commandment of the love of your neighbour? Moses, upon closing of the covenant, introduced *"every commandment"*. Thus according to the Adventists, that Saturday is a substantial part of them, why is it that Jesus does not introduce it?! He does not even mention the Ten Commandments as such. After all, as one is taking his leave, before death, one should mention all important things.

Just so you cannot hold it against me, that I only hold on to one thread, let us see if and how this new commandment and even Saturday stand with the teachings of Christ's Spirit in the books of the New Testament.

Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal 6:2

- “of Christ”, not “of Moses”! Can you show me at least one place, Thomas, where Jesus commands to hold Saturday holy? You cannot explicitly find it anywhere. I know though that you used as an argument the fact that Jesus lived by the Old Testament. But He did not keep it so that we would be submitted to the yoke of its “slavery” (Gal 5:1), but He was submitted to it, so He could “redeem those who were under the law” (Gal 4:5).

This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Jn 13:35

- Not according to this, that you will keep the seventh day at the same time and in the same manner like the Jews.

He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

1 Jn 2:10

- You keep insisting: Not so, because Sunday is the cause for stumbling!

For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”

Gal 5:13-14

- We are free in everything, which has no connection with the love of your neighbour. To keep the seventh day holy has a connection with and basically points to the commandment of love, because if one wants to love like Jesus had (cf. Jn 13:34), one must first know how He loved us, and this recognition stems from the seventh day. Thus this is important by the seventh day and not its position in the line. The act of love in no way depends on

a mathematical order, even though you try your best to point it out to us Catholics. But let us talk about this at another time.

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers.

1 Jn 3:14

- Can a man exist at the same time for love in life and beside Saturday in death?

And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as He commanded us.

1 Jn 3:23

- Why is it that he does not mention Saturday, if that is so important for salvation?

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

1 Jn 4:7-8

- "God is love" — this is the thing, Thomas, that we have agreed upon very well, as you know. So let us go back to Mt 12:1-7, to Jesus' disciples as they go through a field of grain on Saturday, and pick the heads of grain, how the Pharisees point it out to them and how Jesus says to them that there is something greater here than the temple. The Jews thought: What can be greater and more elevated than the temple, where God is present in a special way, and where people venerate Him and adore Him by bringing sacrifices? This is where man fulfills the first part of the Decalogue: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart..." (Mk 12:30). Because even Jews knew that you can simplify the Ten Commandments into two (Lk 10:25). But because the first one is "the first", then the second one was only "the second". And all of a sudden,

Jesus turns this "order" upside down: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice". And the response of Jews to this? Agitation. It was absolutely clear to them that God must be in first place and in any other way this would be impossible, unthinkable. It was all too clear to them. It was for this reason they acted with such certitude. But if this "absolutely clear" was a little bit clearer for them, they would understand, that if we love our neighbour, by this we simply glorify God the most, simply because "God is love". But why is this glorification of God-Love the greatest? For "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). It is easier to keep holy a day, to go to church (congregation), to sing, to listen, to say a prayer, than it is to love friends as well as enemies, to be patient with everyone of equal as well as different opinion, to be gentle with people who are pleasant as well as to those who repulse us... To deny oneself (Mt 16:24) on account of another human is the greatest show of love because it is the hardest one. It is the greatest bow to God-Love, the greatest adoration, thus the most perfect fulfillment of the first commandment.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us.

1 Jn 4:11-12

If anyone says: "I love God", but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

1 Jn 4:20

- According to you, it seems that if anyone says he loves God but does not keep Saturday holy, he is a liar.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You

shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Rom 13:8-10

- "And any other commandment" — You contradict the Bible when insisting: Not any other commandment, because of the commandment to love God cannot be fulfilled by it.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory... (He) will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire'... For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.

Mt 25:31-46

- Take a good look at the above-mentioned section from the Scripture, according to what criteria will a person be judged? Is there a trace of the Saturday that you so understand?! The fact that your church has given itself the name "The Seventh Day" means that the transgression of this is the greatest sin, because the name always contains that which is the most important. How is it that Jesus does not mention this important criterion at the last judgment: "Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire, for you kept holy another day for my sake."

"If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He asked him, "Which one?" And Jesus replied: "You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honour your father and your mother", and "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Mt 19:17-19

- This young man is clearly asking: Which commandments?

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord.

Rom 14:5-6

- “Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind.” — because it is not the days that are important, but love. Understand this, so Saint Paul won’t have to say to you:

Do you want to be slaves to them all over again? You are observing days, months, seasons, and years. I am afraid on your account that perhaps I have labored for you in vain.

Gal 4:9-11

What I have discussed so far illustrates the difference between Catholic and Adventist understanding of the significance of Saturday — the seventh day. Now, let us take an overall look at the Ten Commandments; first the way it is in the Scripture and then in the catechism (the Catechetical Formula):

‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.’

'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.'

'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.'

'Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.'

'You shall not kill.'

'You shall not commit adultery.'

'You shall not steal.'

'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.'

'You shall not covet your neighbour's house;'

'you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's.'

Ex 20:2-17

Catechetical Formula

I am the Lord, your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Honour your father and your mother.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

The Ten Commandments are also in the Second Book of Moses, chapter 20. It is interesting that even in the same Scripture, the Ten Commandments are not exactly the same.

The meaning is the same but not "the letter", and this is exactly our problem.

Catholic Church looks at the "spirit" and you look at the "letter" (cf. 2 Cor 3:6 ff.), the "sequence", the "numbers". I have nothing against numbers, but against the "aura of glory", the "halo" that is made around them, against the fact that you give them meaning which they do not have, by trying to make something substantial out of them. If this were so, why did God not number the commandments clearly in such a way that you know exactly where one begins and ends. The text of the Bible does not number them anywhere.

You insist that the Catholic Church left out the second commandment, while She takes your "second one" for a part of the first one, because "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything..." clearly runs with "You shall have no other gods

before me". Even though this commandment was taken literally by the Jews, the Christians are only bound by the substance of this commandment. The reason is that in the time of the religious "infancy", when the knowledge of God was faint, and also deformed under the influence of man's vices, it happened that people would sometimes confuse Him with the golden calf, or anything else made by human hands. However, through Christ came fullness of the revelation; there are no doubts any more about what God is and how He thinks. Since Jesus is personally God, no one can mix Him up with a golden calf or anything else. Once Christianity came in a place, there the form of before-Christ's paganism can no longer exist. Once Christianity came in a place, there people no longer can bow to statues, or other things made by human hands, there the world cannot remain un-Christian, because if it does not become Christian, it can only be anti-Christian. History and the present are clear examples of this.

The Jews were prohibited from making craven images or likenesses because they did not have a clear idea of God and so there was a danger of mixing true God with the works of their hands.

Since true faith has arrived, we are no longer under the "disciplinarian" (Gal 3:25). From that time on the Church does not require from us the slave-like fulfillment of the letter (cf. 2 Cor 3:6) and it does it because She knows that Jesus called us for freedom. (cf. Gal 5:13-15; 4:31-5:1)

If you, however, think that the commandment is valid to Christians in the same form as it applied to Jews, then answer me, why do you publish illustrated books? Why do you make movies, why let yourselves be photographed, etc.? The commandment, "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness..."

does not apply to you? Why do you keep this commandment by your mouths and deny it by your deeds? Is it maybe only because you have something against Catholic Church?

You write that there were four commandments on the first tablet. Even though it makes no difference to me, I would really like you to show me where in the Scripture that is written.

Let me mention one other thing. From your letter, it seems that the main subject of your faith is above all, the Ten Commandments. If that is so, then this is a basic error. To know fundamental moral law, which each man has inscribed in his own nature, one does not need faith for that because man recognizes it without anyone having to tell him. Whatever I know through my own insight, I have no need to believe it.

For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature observe the prescriptions of the law, they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law. They show that the demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even defend them...

Rom 2:14-15

Faith refers to that which is not seen (Heb 11:1), not only with our eyes but also with our reason. Because if that only referred to eyes, then we would have to believe in mathematics instead of knowing it. Then all people would have to be believers, because everyone believes what one understands.

One can show faith for instance here, when Jesus says, "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:56). It means, I believe in such a way that his flesh is truly food and not a symbolic one, and when he says to me, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His

blood, you do not have life within you" (Jn 6:54), then I will eat his flesh and drink his blood, providing I believe that it is so. Moral law is a moral law, and the truths of faith are the truths of faith. I am not asking you to divide it, only to distinguish.

The only thing which has remained the same in the New Testament as in the Old Testament is the moral law, which flows from human nature. Since human nature has not changed, then natural moral law cannot change either.

I've met people who were sorry for their blasphemies, thefts, lies, for not keeping a single day holy for God, but I have not yet seen a Catholic who was sorry for keeping Sunday holy instead of Saturday, or because he has holy pictures hanging on his walls.

No, the actual day sequence does not have any bearing on the substance of moral law. It has bearing on it only when it is directed by a lawful authority.

That is what scandalizes you most about the Catholic Church. You are scandalized about who and for what reason, except God, had the gall to change the sequence of keeping holy the Lord's day.

The answer:

— the Christ's Church was bold enough to do it

— because Her Bridegroom (Mt 9:15; Jn 3:29; Eph 5:23-32) rose from the dead on that day. And since it is His most glorious day, it is the most glorious day for Her as well. She celebrates the day of His resurrection, and not of His death.

Yes, Thomas, we are at Sunday, at the first day of a week.

So, why Sunday?

The resurrection from the dead is the basis for the preaching of the Gospel — of the good tidings (go-spel = good spel-ling, good speaking, good news). To avoid rewriting the entire New Testament, I'll quote, without any special selection, just three passages from the Scripture:

With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord.

Acts 4:33

... he was preaching about "Jesus" and "Resurrection"... When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to scoff, but others said: "We should like to hear you on this some other time".

Acts 17:18, 32

But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty, too, is our preaching; empty, too, your faith... because... you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

1 Cor 15:12-18

You write that Saturday is the remembrance of creation.

I agree.

However, just like Saturday is only a shadow of what was to come (Col 2:17), so is that of which it is a remembrance, that is the first creation, just a shadow of another creation which happened Sunday morning.

For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation.

Gal 6:15

For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus...

Eph 2:10

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

2 Cor 5:17

Hence, if the Church keeps Sunday holy, it is because She glorifies God for the new creation. The most effective name for the first day of the week is in Russian, because they call it "*voskresenije*" — resurrection.

To live by the New Testament and to praise the old creation is sheer nonsense. The New Testament without "*voskresenije*" is like a meadow without the grass.

This then, Thomas, was the reason for changing the day. Even if I had not explained it, to a believer in Christ, or more precisely: Christ, His words, it should be sufficient to have the following argument, words of the Lord of the sabbath:

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt 16:19

It must be so, because if you cannot change an iota or a dot in the Scripture, then you certainly cannot change a whole sentence.

From your letter, I gather, Thomas, that according to your (Adventist's) understanding of the Holy Scripture, if you come upon two things which "contradict" themselves, you choose to be true to the one that is mostly repeated in the Scripture, or the one that most appeals to

your reason. From what I can gather from your letter, it appears, the Ten Commandments seem to be the most certain for you and the rest is uncertain (or in your words: *can be twisted and turned this way and that*). But in the Scripture, all "wheels" must fit in exactly. Surely, I don't have to remind you of this.

You fall back on the "Decalogue", as the most certain thing, and you back it first of all by the fact that it was written by God's own finger on two stone tablets, which is the symbol of the unchanging and the everlasting. And even though it is pointless to compare or contrast the words in the rock and Jesus' words, let us just compare that which is supposed to last longer: the words in the rock (remember, the first tablets lasted only 40 days) or the words which ring true to this:

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Mt 24:35; Mk 13:31; Lk 21:33

If the Eternal Word had said, "*Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound*", then it should be effectual!! Or do you think that Jesus did not think over the words which He said? That He did not think what immense power He was giving to the hands of a sinner? Isn't that why you can't comprehend these and other words, that you don't understand what the Prophet Isaiah says?

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,... As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.

Is 55:8-9

That Christ gave to His Church noticeable jurisdictions and privileges is certainly clear from the above statement.

Let us look at the Scripture, (the New Testament of course), to make sure that this statement is not taken out of context.

Then Jesus approached and said to them: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age".

Mt 28:18-20

- "Go, therefore" — He sends them because He has the power to send them. Whoever is not given the power, cannot send.

- "Teaching them" — thus the Church has not only the right but also the duty to teach. It would be ridiculous if believers and unbelievers alike did not have the duty to listen to Her. No, Thomas, simple believers cannot instruct, or as you put it, "control" those to whom Jesus said, "Teach!". Because the teaching authority of the Church was not given to everyone, only to the appointed ones (Mt 28:16).

- "Make disciples of all nations" — from this we can see that Jesus is not only addressing His eleven apostles, but also their successors because the eleven could not evangelize all the nations. They could not even evangelize the nations which existed at that time, let alone others. What about the Slav people or people in America?

- "Baptizing them" — The apostles did not baptize you, Thomas. And if the command to go and baptize only belonged to the apostles, how then was any one of Adventists bold enough to baptize you?

• "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" — why then do the Adventists baptize only in the name of the Son (Jesus), as you were baptized?

Now we're back to what I said a while back.

The Scripture states:

He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus

Acts 10:48

"John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:4-5

• I understand your interpretation of the Bible in this way: since in the Acts of the Apostles there is mention of baptism in the name of Jesus twice and Jesus commands to baptize in the name of three divine Persons just once, then the truth is there when it is mentioned twice.

You know yourself what a significant meaning baptism has, *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk 16:16). Since baptism is so necessary for one's salvation, Pope Steven I (+257), against the opinion of some bishops, stated if heretics or schismatics observe the rites, they baptize validly. Thus, the Church does not require always baptism from Christians when becoming Catholics.

To baptize "in the name of the Lord Jesus", means nothing else but to baptize as he told us to do, that is "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit". It results from the previous statement (Acts 19:4-5), that they did not let themselves be baptized by John's baptism but by Jesus'. We can see this better in 1 Cor 1:10f, where Paul says, *"I give thanks (to God) that I baptized none*

of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my name". If the Apostle baptized someone and that person boasted that he was baptized "in the name of Paul", it only meant that Paul was the one who baptized him the way he (Paul) baptized, because you can be sure that Paul did not baptize him: "I baptize you in the name of Paul." In this context, you can see that in their language to be baptized in the name of someone means to be baptized by his baptism.

Even if I did not take this into consideration (and I can't see any reason not to), there is the matter that if I baptize in the name of three Persons, I would fulfill both "contradictions", because the Lord Jesus is one of those three Persons. At least, I would be certain.

No, Thomas, I am not writing this to take away your peace, but because I know of a better one.

- "Teaching them to observe all" — he does not say "let them learn from a book". And further, it means that a Christian is not an instant case. A Christian has, throughout his life, to know his faith more and more, and do that under the authority of the Church.

- "That I have commanded you" — the word "I" refers to Jesus not Moses. The New Testament not the Old one.

- "And behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." — That is with the apostles and their successors; that is with the Church. How else can these words of Jesus make sense since the apostles died long ago!

- "All days" — That which Jesus founded, will never fall apart. There would be not a single day in which His Church would cease to exist. These words talk of life on earth because that is the one that has "days, even unto the consummation of the world".

Thomas, — sincerely, — are these words fulfilled better in any other place than they are in the Catholic Church?

And again, these are words which are stated at the end when one speaks without any "wrappings". *"At last, you are speaking plainly"*, his disciples exclaimed, *"without talking in veiled language"* (Jn 16:29).

He said to them: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.

Mk 16:15

• From this statement it is again evident that the command is not only for the apostles but also for the ones whom they would appoint as their successors.

He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.

Lk 10:16

If he refuses to listen even to the Church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt 18:17-18

• Thus the Church has the right to dismiss the ones who refuse to obey.

Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account.

Heb 13:17

Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the Church of God...

Acts 20:28

- Take note of the fact that this does not only refer to the apostles, to whom you give sole authority.
- Besides, is a sheep capable of telling the shepherd how to graze and feed it?

Feed my sheep.

Jn 21:17

What else can I add to this? What other proof can I offer you, since all these words have been a living reality in the Catholic Church for the entire two thousands years.

The Holy Spirit says through the Apostle:

From among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Acts 20:30

- He does not say: "You will fall away from one man speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples ." Heretics fell away from the Church and not the Church from them.

At this point, to tie all this together, I would like to tell you a story:

A woman, Adventist, came to see a priest. She gave him a book to read — a book written by Mrs. E. White. When he was returning the book back to her, he said, and I quote:

"Christ Lord said, 'You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.'" But Ellen White says that the Church disappeared after the year 313. So, you people believe more in Miss White than in Christ the Lord!

So far I have focused, more or less, about the lasting of the Church and Her teaching office. Now, let us look at the same problem from the point of view of "mission".

As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.

Jn 20:21

- The sending (mission) starts at the Father. Nobody can send himself. This is obvious in worldly affairs already. What can we then say about the most important matter — eternal salvation? Just think, Thomas, what a dare it is, and I cannot not call it pride, if someone takes a dare to talk of eternal salvation authoritatively of his own. An emissary cannot deal with the problems of state unless the president gives him a mission, that is, sends him to a foreign country to conduct diplomatic or political negotiations.

In our case, we see that the Father sent the Son. Jesus sent the apostles, and the apostles laid their hands on others. Those in turn, by laying on of hands, appointed others. This chain remains to this day in the Catholic Church. That is one of the reasons why She is called the Apostolic Church. This succession is a clear sign by which anyone can recognize whether a person is sent by Christ or not. This was also clear to Ellen White, your foundress, when she said that in the year 313, the Church and the state merged. By this she unwillingly acknowledged that the Catholic Church, the one after the year 313 until now, is identical to the Church before the year 313.

You, Lord, ... show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away...

Acts 1:24-25

Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men,... whom we shall appoint to this task... They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them.

Acts 6:3-6

- "We shall appoint" — that is "we — the apostles". The priests are not appointed by a congregation, nor can it give them spiritual power, since the congregation of believers has none. But spiritual authority comes from Jesus and, through the apostles, comes to the entire priestly order in the Church.

- "They presented these men to the apostles"

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said: "Set aside for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them". Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:2-3

- It was not enough that the Holy Spirit called them, the apostles had to set Barnabas and Saul aside by a visible sign.

From Miletus he had the Presbyters of the Church at Ephesus summoned. When they came to him, he addressed them: "... Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the Church of God..."

Acts 20:17-18; 28

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate.

1 Tim 4:14

For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.

2 Tim 1:6

For this reason I left you in Crete so that you might set right what remains to be done and appoint presbyters in every town.

Ti 1:5

Do not lay hands too readily on anyone...

1 Tim 5:22

Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity, without laying the foundation all over again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And we shall do this, if only God permits.

Heb 6:1-3

- “Repentance from dead works” (that is from sins, cf. Heb 9:14) — is that which goes hand in hand with indulgences, “laying on of hands” is what we are speaking about right now, and “eternal judgment” is the one that you claim as non-eternal. Just a few words but how meaningful! And along with all this, as the Apostle says, this is only the basis of faith, only the basic teaching. How then, is it possible that not all basics are in the Scripture? Where for instance are the prescriptions for baptism, and for laying on of hands? And the Catholic Church has all of these. Because, as She teaches, the source of the revealed truths is the Scripture and the Tradition (the one which the Church has in mind).

Jesus therefore, while teaching in the temple, cried out and said... “I have not come of myself, but he is true who has sent me... he has sent me.”

Jn 7:28-29

He, who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.

Jn 12:44-45

He who rejects me, and does not accept my words, has one to condemn him. The word that I have spoken will condemn him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but he who sent me, the Father, has commanded me what I should say, and what I should declare... The things, therefore, that I speak, I speak as the Father has bidden me.

Jn 12:48-50

Amen, amen, I say to you, he who receives anyone I send, receives me; and he who receives me, receives him who sent me.

Jn 13:20

• Jesus does not say: "anything I send" but "anyone". So, this refers to the people and not to the Scripture.

He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me; and he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me.

Lk 10:16

Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Mk 16:15

"For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then are they to call upon him in whom they have not believed? But how are they to believe him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear, if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they be sent?... Faith then depends on hearing, and hearing on the word of Christ.

Rom 10:13-15,17

Thus, Thomas, if you seek the truth, judge for yourself, how the Catholic Church fits with the Scripture, and ask yourself a question "Who is Ellen White? Who empowered her to start a new church? In whose name has she come?" Because if she came in the name of her own reasoning, in the name of how her reason looked at the Scripture, that is in her own name, then I have to say: "Poor person". And if she came through the mission of the Lord Jesus, since the mission comes from Him (see above), how can she prove this?

Does the following statement not apply to the Adventists also? — *"If another come in his own name, him you will receive"* (Jn 5:43).

And if you remember, Thomas, the argument which you put in front of me most often, with which we used to finish our dialogues and upon which we stopped understanding each other (would it not be better to say: "trusting"?), was the sinfulness of the Catholic Church. And even now, after so many years, you write:

I often meet with Catholics, simple members, and every day I can observe the "fruits" of the state. Again I repeat to you: "False religion bears false life."

And elsewhere you write:

... and you cannot see the results (fruits) of this state in the past and at the present. And Jesus says, that a tree is known by its fruit...

What's in this?

I must admit, and also apologize, that I always considered people who used this argument against the Catholic Church as people of bad will. But I have realized that I had underestimated this problem. Now I

know that not everyone who uses this argument is entirely without good will, because I realize that the sins of us, Catholics, are a big gap on the road to the Catholic Church. Certainly, the words of the Holy Spirit, which the Apostle wrote to his brothers, also apply to Catholics, and especially to Catholics:

The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

Rom 2:24

Nevertheless, this is only one side of the story.

But let us stay with it now.

If you hold sinlessness of members as a criterion of the true Church — consequently of its religion, which it proclaims, — then there is no true church because

all sinned

Rom 5:12

If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourself, and the truth is not in us.

Jn 1:8

If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Jn 1:10

I take it, Thomas, that if I had not brought forth these arguments, it would never occur to you to say that Adventists are without sin. But then, not even the Adventist church is the true one because its members sin also.

Yes, I know there is also a second possibility, a second possibility only, that you consider yourselves lesser sinners than Catholics. In this case, does not your position look as the position of the man, who (according to me, since I also caught myself in such a position) prayed quite with a good intention:

God, I thank you that I am not like other men... or even like this tax collector.

LK 18:11

Surely you know how that person fared before God.

Do the words of Jesus not apply to you also:

Do not judge, and you shall not be judged; do not condemn, and you shall not be condemned.

Lk 6:37

If not, let the Adventists be the first ones who throw the "stone" at Catholics (Jn 8:7).

Or would it be possible there is a third impossible possibility?

Sorry, Thomas, for this neck-breaking turnaround, but I only used it because if you want to say that you don't consider yourselves lesser sinners than the Catholics, then I do not understand what you possibly meant by pointing a finger at the sinfulness of the Catholics.

I'll backtrack a little:

If the truth of proclaiming is directly the result of how much members of a particular church sin, then every church would — according to your way of thinking — have more or less to proclaim heresies because in every church the members sin. If this principle is to be applied for Catholics, why not to Adventists as well?

Jesus said: "Go, therefore... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." But who could teach you "all" if true preaching would depend on sinlessness?

Here you can prove your faith, if you believe that God has the power to give you His teachings through fallible people infallibly.

Furthermore, there is a substantial difference between pointing at mud and pointing at light. To point at mud, firstly, does not uphold anyone. Secondly, it puts down the person we talk about, and thirdly, and worst of all, we do harm to ourselves because we take away God's help, as it is written: "*God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble*" (1 Pt 5:5).

Because love "*does not rejoice over wrongdoing*" (1 Cor 13:6), I do not want to count on maliciousness regarding you, with an evil will, but I take into consideration the unawareness of the matter.

The whole point is: if a fisherman wants the fish to bite the hook, he baits it with a delicious — at least for the fish — worm. If the evil spirit wants man to bite his hook, he must wrap it in something that is very tasty to man; and that is greatness. He shows him the sins of others, "Look at the sins of this one! You do not do this." — Simple trick, but very effective. — "It is true — thinks man for himself — I am not like him. I am better. I don't do such things! Hmm... at least, it does not occur to me so often," thinks the one and there it remains in his subconscious: "Regarding that, I am better than the other one. I am more virtuous." Thus, he used his neighbour as a step that he stood on, so that he seemed great to himself. And so he swallowed the "hook" — fell into the most odious sin, pride.

No, I am not writing to you to point out that the Adventists have this sin, since I do not say that we do not

fall into it. It is just that this problem in spiritual life is, if not the greatest, then certainly one of the greatest. I have just explained its substance to you. In practical life, it has many forms which are not always readily and easily distinguished. On one hand, people run away from pride, and on the other hand, they run right into its open arms. Only with God's help can man gain victory, or better still, to be in a state of overcoming it unceasingly throughout his whole life. The saints feared most of all that they would believe in their own holiness, and that is why they humiliated themselves wherever possible, according to the words of the Scripture, *"in humility count others better than yourselves"* (Phil 2:3).

Saint Vincent, for example, when he entered into a town would pray to God not to punish the town because such a great sinner (he meant himself) entered into it.

All the saints were convinced about their nothingness. To prove that their conviction was not empty words can be seen in their deeds.

Saint Francis of Sales sheds light on this problem by saying that self-love dies half an hour after the person dies.

I mean that the devil knows human psyche and knows where it is at its most vulnerable. Just look around. Criticism is all over. In the profane life as well as in the religious life. And criticism has one thing in common: the other person is the sinner, not me.

You pointed out to me several times that the Catholic Church tolerates the lukewarm or those who do not fulfill their Christian duties. According to you, She should exclude them. The church should only keep the quality members so that She would not be a scandal for the world.

Such a loving thought!

Even for a lot of Catholics.

But whoever thinks like that, is being hooked himself onto the same hook we talked about before, because he surely counts himself as one of those quality members; better than others.

Let us again look at the Scripture.

While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Mt 9:10-13

- The Church is for sinners

Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

Mt 11:19

- In the same way, as these words were addressed to Jesus, they are addressed to His Church today, "Look, she is a friend of sinners. She cannot be from God."

His slaves said to him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" He replied, "No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds and tied them in bundles for burning;'"

Mt 13:28-30

- Let the weeds in the Catholic Church not scandalize you, because the Church

... collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age.

Mt 13:47-49

A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench.

Mt 12:20

- Look at Judas' situation. They knew he was a thief, yet Jesus gave him a chance right up to the end. They did not throw him out of their midst.

Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted.

Gal 6:1

For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in...

Jas 2:2

- What a contrast in the early church already. Nevertheless the Spirit of Love says, "you do well" (Jas 2:8), as you do not exclude even rich men from your assembly. Just make sure you do not put them, for the sake of their reaches, ahead of the poor ones." But the other spirit cries out: "The Church is too benevolent!"

And if we only point out the bad side of the early Church, and incessantly stress it, the early Church would

diminish in your eyes just as the Catholic Church does in your eyes today. Let us look further!

Apostle Paul writes to the Galatians:

Where now is that blessedness of yours?

Gal 4:15

But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

Gal 5:15

To the Corinthians he writes:

Now indeed [then] it is, in any case, a failure on your part that you have lawsuits against one another... you inflict injustice and cheat, and this to brothers.

1 Cor 6:7-8

Look what James the apostle writes:

Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from?... You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Adulterers!

Jas 4:1-4

Now look what Jesus told the church in Pergamum:

I have a few things against you. You have some people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam.

Rev 2:14

to the church in Sardis:

I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God... repent... you have a few people in Sardis who

have not soiled their garments; they will walk with me dressed in white, because they are worthy.

Rev 3:2-4

or the church in Laodicea:

I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

Rev 3:15-16

In the Scripture there are some more examples, but these should suffice.

The Church is a mother, and when some of her sons become morally bad, She does not just throw them out. She does not look at what the world says about her family, She does not listen if someone offers advice to be finally strict, but She suffers, She prays, She advises, prompts and above all, waits. Because that is what love tells Her to do. And the same love makes Her throw the sinner out of Her house if he influences the other children at home and tries to make them just as bad. That's what happens in the Catholic Church when She has to excommunicate — to expel from the Church.

And one more thing about sinfulness!

Whoever has the greater knowledge, can sin more (cf. Lk 12:47). If people so vehemently point out sins to Catholics and these same faults are seen as being many times bigger than in other people, by that very fact, though few realize it, they are actually acknowledging that the truth is in the Catholic Church. Would Judas be so proverbial had he not been the member of the Christ Church?

So, just as the sin of Judas, or the failings of other apostles or the early Christians, could not ruin that which God-Man has founded, neither can the Church be destroyed by the sins of some Popes, Bishops or ordinary believers.

Enough of darkness!

Yet, we had to enlighten it too.

Now, let us look at the light. It, and not darkness, is the measure by which we distinguish gold from silver, silver from bronze and so on.

Adventists use darkness as their argument, the Catholic Church uses light.

It looks like this:

In a kingdom, there came a famine. The king ordered: "Go to the sea and catch some fish for my people!" Two ships went out. They looked the same at first glance. One ship caught 12 tons of fish and threw 4 tons away because they were bad. The other ship caught 20 pieces of fish and threw 5 pieces away because they were bad. When the first ship came back, the crew put 8 tons of fish before the king. The crew of the second ship also put their catch at his feet and told him: "But we only threw away 5 bad fish, while these ones had 4 tons of them!" The king answered: "Still, you were fishing in the whole sea as well as they were".

Two friends were walking side by side. On their walk they came upon a tree which was laden with tasty fruit. They stood in front of it for a moment, without a word.

Then one said: "What a good for nothing tree!" The other looked at him in surprise. He could not understand how his friend came to that conclusion. But inasmuch that their friendship had a great importance to him, he was willing to accept the possibility of doubting his own reasoning and admit his friend's view. Notwithstanding, the tree in front of him was a too-clear reality to be able to doubt. Because he had never admitted that his friend might have a bad will, he saw just one solution: "Why do you say that?" — he asked. "Look — his friend answered — look at this branch! It is empty. Look, even this one is empty... even this one... even that one... and even that one over there".

And thirdly, this picture, Thomas:

The quality of mountain climbing equipment is never evaluated by how many people did not make it to the top, (i.e., did not use it, or did use it in a wrong way) but according to how many climbers reached the alpine tops and how tall the peaks that they conquered were.

Then, let us not judge people by their names, whether they are Catholics or non-Catholics, but by their fruits.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

Mt 5:14-16

Should I pat myself on the back? No! Since I am not going to talk about myself but about others. No one can take credit for other person's deeds, only the person who actually did them, — and God, because one's deeds are done, first of all, through His grace.

I warn you, also, that I do not want to and I also could not mention all the fruits which the Catholic Church — Her teachings, doctrine — brought to mankind. But neither can I give you a systematic overlook. Nevertheless, there will be enough to compare. I will talk in general as well as in specifics. So as not to give support to your opinion that I know everything just generally, and "consume" everything that the Catholic Church feeds me, I'll start with concrete examples:

In January 1948, a sister in a Loretan Monastery asked her Mother Superior for permission to live alone outside the monastery and to work in the poor settlements of Calcutta. In February 1948, she asked the Pope Pius XII for official permission, which she received.

In Calcutta there are millions of people who live in the streets; there they are born and there they die. This sister, on August 18, 1948, left the monastery, put on a simple white sari, which is worn by Bengal women, and began to collect provisions for the people that she would serve: aspirin, bandages, iodine, etc. She started empty-handed, but with a heart full of faith and hope in God's help. On March 19, 1949, she accepted a young woman by the name of Subhasini Das. Today, there are several thousands of them, and they are called the Missionaries of Love. Today, they work all over the world and they work among the poorest of poor. They even have a male branch of the order. I'll give you some statistics (from 1975):

Missionaries of Love have 65 houses in India. From those, 10 are for brothers, 81 schools, 335 mobile ambulances, 67 clinics for the sick, 28 houses for orphans, 28 places for family planning, and 32 houses for the dying. Sister Agnes (Das) estimated at the number of people they looked after at 1.6 million, and the number in the houses for the dying at 2,000. The clinics looked after

43,000. The brothers and sisters looked after 2,000 orphans. That is the fruit of the first 25 years of their order. And all this is based on love and maintained by love because it was built on the basis of alms which now comes from all over the whole world. Not only do the gifts come from all over the world, but students from the western world travel to help out over the summer holidays. I read that some of the students claimed that after their experience, their lives have taken a different turn.

That, in short, is the story of Mother Teresa. She was known worldwide under this name. But should not each and every one of these thousands of sisters also be known? Although we cannot know all their names, behind each name there is a young girl who decided to renounce marriage because of her love of Jesus and the kingdom of heaven, to realize the ideal of Christian perfection:

If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

Mt 19:21

Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so... some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.

Mt 19:12

Have any of the Adventists comprehend this part of the Scripture? Thanks to the Catholic Church, more than one million women have comprehended it just in our time alone. That is how many members of the female orders there are and approximately an equal number of brothers and/or priests. How many have there been in the entire history of the Church!? Even if I had not written this entire huge letter, this very fact

alone should be sufficient argument for the authenticity of the Catholic Church.

Since you do not recognize the Catholic faith, I won't write about all those who laid down their lives for the Catholic faith, nor those who brought spiritual goods to mankind which cannot be "felt", such as the deeds of Mother Teresa. So, let us look at some more of the ones whose fruits are tangible.

A hundred years ago, in Turin, Don Bosco died. As far as I know, you held his biography in your hand, although, as I remember, you did not read much of it. That reality was too much in discord with your opinion. Because of that, you denied all the facts of his biography. You denied that something like that was ever possible.

In other words, your position toward the historical facts is: If you need to prove something against the Church, then history "works", but when there is something in favor of the Church, then history "does not work".

I mentioned Don Bosco. This priest had a following of young people of Turin; he helped them, he built homes for the homeless, and brought them to God. He founded in 1859 a congregation, now spread all over the world that looks after youth; they are called Salesians. Even in Slovakia they had their houses and looked after youth, until they were forced out by the communists (Note: This is written a short time before the fall of communism in the Eastern Europe).

For example, during the life of Don Bosco there was great pestilence in Turin. His boys looked after people who were struck by it. All of them obviously were volunteers. It is interesting to note that not one of them died during the pestilence.

Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) dedicated his life

to looking after the sick and the old. He is the founder of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity. His work is similar to the life and deeds of Mother Teresa. If telecommunications were the same then as they are today, he would also be world renown. His order and the women's section still exist today. It happened once that this saint changed places with a criminal who was taken to the galley. When the caravan came to Africa, a certain captain recognized him. Saint Vincent would not allow them to take off his chains until they assured him that no harm would come to the prisoner.

Maximillian Kolbe, a priest who was just recently canonized, volunteered to switch places with a father of a family who was scheduled to go into the "bunker of hunger" in Auschwitz and died in his place.

There is a similar case from the French Revolution. A sister, by the name of Elizabeth, came to prison to console a woman who was to be executed. The woman had a baby who would probably have died at home. She was beside herself and started to despair. Then the nun suggested that they switch their clothes. The trick worked and the next day the nun was executed.

Not too long ago, a beatified priest, Peter Donders, a Dutchman, worked in Surinam, among the lepers. Along with dealing with their spiritual needs, he also helped them with their physical needs. The officials were alerted to his sacrificial work. They honoured him with some kind of a medal and decided to go directly to him to bestow it on him. But because of an unbearable stink, they ran away from the place. He worked in this atmosphere for 27 years, out of love for God and his neighbours.

Father Joseph Damien (b. 1840) served among the lepers on the island of Molokai, Hawaii. The colony's

800 lepers had only the clothing and food rations supplied by the government. Officially, Damien was the pastor of the Catholics in the colony, but actually he served as the lepers' physician, counselor, house-builder, sheriff, gravedigger, and undertaker. For 10 of his 16 years with the lepers, he was without the companionship of other priests. He founded two orphanages at the leprosarium, and effectively fought the immorality, drunkenness, and lawlessness that he found among the adult lepers when he came. By 1884, when he had contracted leprosy, he wrote that he would not wish to be cured if the price of his cure involved leaving the island and giving up his work. He continued that work untiringly until the month before his death (d. April 15, 1889). One attack upon Damien's reputation by a Protestant clergyman was answered by R. L. Stevenson in his *Open Letter to Dr. Hyde* (Boston 1900).

Let us also mention Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231), who with the revenue from her dowry, built a hospital where she cared for the poor, sick, and outcast, growing rapidly in holiness until her death at the age of 24. She was a mother of three; Herman (1222), Sophie (1224) and Gertrude (1227).

All of European culture (which came to America) is based on Christianity, whose bearer was the Catholic Church and still is to this day. The Church built schools, universities and hospitals. The Church had to lay and build the basics of science, even though it was not her primary mission.

Yes, some "scientists" look at the Church with disdain. They are like the son, who after growing up and leaving the house to live on his own, started to make fun of his mother. He forgot that when he was small, she was the one who had to change his diapers. When science was "in its diapers", it was the priests and monks who first took care of its development.

Perhaps you might mention the case of Galileo. I'll answer you with a trite but strikingly truthful answer: "He, who does nothing, cannot break anything."

I cannot leave out mentioning Saints Cyril and Methodius. At the time when they came to our ancestors in Slovakia (863), Slavs had no, and I repeat, no alphabet. Saints Cyril and Methodius created the cyrillic alphabet for them, which even according to the enemies of the Catholic Church themselves, is a "work of the European significance". Furthermore, "The old Slovanic orthography has reached the level of Byzantine Greek and had surpassed all up-to-date attempts of national orthography among the Western European nations..."

Any culture, as you know, as well as any science and advance, start at reading and writing. But in reference to our dialogue, there is something more interesting. The first words which were translated into the Old Slovanic, were the words of the Scripture: "In the beginning was the Word..." The brothers translated the entire Scripture into a language that people understood. So I cannot understand how you are able say that the Church is against the Scripture and does not want people to know it? Is it not a lack of elementary justice?

All the charitable works (the hospitals, old age homes, orphanages, homes for the mentally retarded...) stand on Catholic foundations. Saint Basil is the first one, who put the foundation for the modern form of hospitals. He was not content with having provided food for an entire year (368) to a region devastated by famine, so in Caesarea of Cappadocia, he began to construct (372), on the edge of the city, a group of buildings (church, monastery, school of arts and trades, hospices, and hospital) destined to receive wayfarers, sick persons, and especially lepers, and staffed them with qualified personnel.

You may think I've gone off the edge. Just ask yourself, why are nurses in our hospitals called "sisters" and why, for example, are the women in offices not called "office sisters"? (Note: Slav people call a nurse "sister".)

And what about Pope John Paul II? You claim that he is the beast. I ask you, Thomas, "Are you certain of that because you have seen his bad fruits or because the other Adventists, or better yet, the spirit of Adventism, (since the other Adventists may be in the same situation as you are) has told you so? Could you mention some of his crimes, other than the fact that he is a Catholic, of course? How is it possible that a killer who was firing shots at him is now sorry for him, asks for his forgiveness and prays for him? Maybe by the prince of demons he drove a demon out of him? Would Jesus not ask you:

How can Satan drive out Satan?

Mk 3:23

A Japanese girl was converted to Christianity sheerly by watching a television broadcast of the papal visit in Japan.

On his travels over the world, he never forgets to visit the poorest of poor, the trampled national minorities, and stops to defend their rights, even though by doing so, he comes to the attention of the ruling upper echelon. He fiercely defends the rights of those unborn ones, even though it is not a popular thing to do nowadays. He visits prisoners, the sick and lepers. More than once he hugged a leper. Has any Adventist or even one of your leaders hugged a leper? I know, you will probably say that all this is just hypocrisy, but in that case, "Dear Lord, let everyone be such a hypocrite".

How can you, Thomas, not see that in your hatred of the Pope you are in a line with the worst atheists, that you shout hatred towards him into the same microphone?!

(Note: It was especially evident during the communist rule, when this was written.) Nevertheless, there is nothing surprising in this, Thomas:

*If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul,
how much more those of his household!*

Mt 10:25

Then, how much more His first servant who is on the chair of Peter? Actually, Catholics should thank you for strengthening their faith. Are you and your leaders so hated by the world, as the Catholic Church and the Pope exclusively? If you, Thomas, have eyes, you see and I don't have to show you; if you do not have eyes, it would be pointless to show you.

I think there was enough foolish boasting of the Catholic Church (see 2 Cor 11:16-12:13). Now we can compare. Can you show me, Thomas, one case where Adventist nuns took care of those whom the world had left out? I have never met, nor have I known an Adventist who would renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

I can safely say that I have travelled some, but I met very few Adventists, or better to say, just heard of them. There were five examples. Of those, four were to be given some glory, but one had a negative effect. The glory was that they were good workers.

I do not refuse their fruits!

But I can't help but see the same fruits in Catholics. In my lifetime, I've met many Catholics who have been doing their jobs and fulfilling their duties at work as well as at home very conscientiously. The Adventist does not want to work on Saturday and so he is often a curiosity at his workplace, so everyone can notice him and watch him. But if a Catholic works conscientiously, nobody

notices it because it is something normal. In other words, a Catholic is too common a world-view, to be noticed because of that. Besides, the Catholics for whom religion is just a formality, do them a "good service". It is a general trend that it is pointed to the sinfulness of Catholics, the result of which is that the ones who fulfill their duties fall even further into not being noticed in their surroundings. But that is really good, because, in such a way, they are well-protected against pride — against the worst. See, even this is an advantage to the Catholic Church.

My boss at my previous job in a hotel, told me about being in a concentration camp in the Soviet Union. He personally saw Adventists being forced to work on Saturday. Even though they had barrels of guns pointed at their chests and had a noose around their necks, they did not relent.

You have to admire people who stand behind their convictions so boldly.

And even though I am convinced that their conscience is erroneous (see Rom 14:5), I still believe that God will reward such a person:

Before his own master he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Rom 14:4

"*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas.*" "Plato is my friend but truth is a greater friend", said Aristotle, Plato's student. I want to say, Thomas, that no matter how highly I regard those Adventists, I cannot ignore the matter in Jesus' light. Jesus says,

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Jn 15:13

Think then, what is more, to lay one's life for a neighbour or for Saturday?

And to those who laid their lives for their neighbour, we do not just mean those who died quickly like Kolbe, but those like Mother Teresa, and thousands of her religious sisters, who forsook everything, all their lawful goods, which life brings, in order to serve the poor completely.

Catholicism does not stop me from seeing good sides in others, Thomas, and that is why I am able to realize that you are glad to be among Adventists and certainly you may even have many friends there. But I am still sure that if you are of a good will, you will have to say, "*magis amica veritas*".

I would like to add one more thing here.

God listens to everyone who does pray to him, whether it be an Adventist or a Catholic or a Muslim. If you consider the rightness of the Adventist church from the fact that you have noticed hearings there, that does not prove much, because Jesus says,

Everyone who asks, receives.

Mt 7:8

What should I add in the end? How can I explain the fact that you do not see the fruits of the Catholic Church? Bad will? Until there is another possibility, I do not want to explain it in that way.

What was the first thing, Thomas, that the spirit of Adventism had taught you? Was it to understand the Scripture, or to understand the sinfulness of the Catholics? I think it is the latter, because otherwise, even after so many years, you would not consider as the only sure thing in the whole Scripture the Ten Commandments. This, Thomas, is basically your stumbling block. And if you

cannot see the light in the Catholic Church, then I excuse you by saying, that it is impossible to look at the light and the dark simultaneously.

Everything I wrote to you was a confrontation of our views with the Holy Scripture, which you consider as the only rule of faith, or as you put it: "*Sola Scriptura*".

Let us see now, what does the Scripture says about itself, whether it holds itself as the **immediate** rule, by which a person is to decide what and how to believe.

The first thing which you state resolutely, is that Jesus expressly commands everyone to read the Scripture and thus, find the truth:

[The Lord] Jesus' command: "Search the Scripture...", is valid for everyone not just the priests.

So, I looked in the Scripture and found nothing to this effect. I did, however, find this:

You search the Scripture, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf.

Jn 5:39

In the Bible, which you gave me, is the following:

{You} Search the Scripture, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf.

Jn 5:39

Thus in both our and your Scripture, we see a simple announcing mode of the sentence and not a tone of order. The announcing mode of the sentence is clearly evident from the sentence. You know, even if the spirit of Adventism in the newer translation of your Scripture erased the {You}, which I see here in brackets, and made the sentence a command mode, he still would not solve anything, because Jesus addresses these words toward the scribes and Pharisees, which is evident from

the preceding verse 33; it was they who sent emissaries to John (Jn 1:19).

The simple folk, "crowd," do not read the Scripture, because obviously, they cannot read, but they listen, when the scribes and the Pharisees read and explain it.

The crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ abides forever."

Jn 12:34

- Thus, they have "heard" and not "read".

How else can the following words of Jesus be valid?

The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice.

Mt 23:2-3

Here, I ask you, Thomas, if, according to you, the Old Testament is still valid, why is it that you listen to the Adventist hierarchy and not Jewish rabbis? I do not listen to them, because I know that their authority ended with the last supper, when Jesus instituted the New Covenant, and along with it, the chair of Peter. If the Old Testament hierarchy has such importance, how much greater, then, is the one from the New Testament! Why would the Lord Jesus be speaking of it before its ending, if not with regard to the new one.

Further you write and underline:

The Scripture and the Scripture alone, is the supreme criterion of truth.

But the Scripture says:

The church... (is) the pillar and foundation of truth.

1 Tim 3:15

Who am I to believe, you or the Scripture?

Also, Thomas, you look at the matter from the visual angle of the 20th century and you even narrow this angle to our circumstances. Widen then your outlook to the entire 2,000 years and to all the countries, and there apply your view to "The Scripture Alone".

Will it stand its ground?

Such massive literacy, that is ability to read or write, is a phenomenon only of the last centuries (if not just the last century). For example, before the coming of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Slavs had no alphabet at all, let alone being able to read. But even nowadays the situation isn't rosy. In Ethiopia, there are 40% illiterates, in India 90%.

Why are you spreading your religion in the "Third World", and not only there; with the help of pictures and films? Why do you not put a Bible into the hands of those illiterates and tell them: "Here, read!" Why do you ask those people to believe your teachers first?

I suppose it is because they are not able to read.

You see, Thomas, it is enough for such an argument to make me stop writing more. But if I am this far, I would like to paint "the picture" that my eyes see right to the end. Maybe with God's help, you will see it in the same way.

Let us keep going:

Let us look and see if your basic statement "*Sola Scriptura*" can be valid at least to people who are able to read:

1. Do you have the original of the Scripture? You, personally!

I'll answer for you: NO. Because the original of the Scripture was only one and that was transcribed, and the duplicates were transcribed further. Actually, they were not rewritten by themselves, people did it, and other people again translated them, and finally one such exemplar of the Bible landed in your hands. I just do not know how you could have gotten the exemplar without that tradition (*traditio* — action of handing over).

2. Do you read the Scripture in the original language (Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek)?

You have a university education, and so I do not have to explain to you, translations from language to language are not done mechanically, word for word, because more than likely, they would not make any sense, but in choosing the words, you must take into consideration the entire (correct) meaning. So it is not enough for the translator to know the language, he must also understand the matter that he translates.

You have relied then on the Adventist teachers. You have placed your faith in them, you have believed that they themselves have clear sight in the matter and that they explain the Scripture to you without error, infallibly. Since the very translation of the Scripture is actually its explanation.

3. How do you know which books belong to the Scripture, and that their author has been the Holy Spirit and are thus infallible (better: inspired)?

I can only see two possibilities: Since you were not personally there with Jesus, (at that time the New Testament was not even written) nor with the apostles, you either determined to yourself that you yourself or someone else told you that.

a) If you yourself determined that for yourself, which books from the millions that exist, are without error, and

even their entire content, each word, each comma, that inevitably means that you also are in this matter infallible. That means that you can infallibly distinguish truth from a lie. It means that you can — among so many books which state that they contain the life-truth — find the true ones and even say there is no word, not even a comma against the truth in them. Well, there is one more Pope in the world.

b) If others told you that, Thomas, why are you not scandalized by it? And not just here, but in all three cases and in the example of illiteracy, the dealing is with tradition. Here, I am partially explaining the Catholic concept of the tradition which so much scandalizes you. Why does the tradition in the Adventists not scandalize you? I have no idea.

In the closing of these ideas, I am asking you in your own words:

In the question of your salvation, do you rely on other people?

Once, there was a series on TV that dealt with book printing. I remembered that in the time before the print invention (1436), one book had the same price as all the houses on a street. If you let on, that all the people do and did know how to read, you would have to admit that all of them know the three biblical languages, that they have studied all the questions relating to the historical, philosophical, geographical, cultural or other Biblical background, and that, up to the XV-th century, all the believers were rich people. So, from "*Sola Scriptura*", it would come that Jesus made the spreading of Christianity dependent on learning and riches. Why then, does He say:

*I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
for although you have hidden these things from the wise*

and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.

Mt 11:25

He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor

Lk 4:18

But there is one more complication, which a friend of mine pointed out to me. You can scarcely get a Bible (Note: during communism). You see, from the point of view of the "*Sola Scriptura*", arises complication after complication, and the Catholic teaching that the faith of people is to be guided in the first place by the teaching office of the Church is in no way to be explained out. "*Faith comes from what is heard*" and not from what is read (Rom 10:17).

A live teaching office can adapt itself to its listeners, their mentality, language, understanding... The Scripture cannot do this. God is our Father and He could not have left us out in the cold when it came to having good tidings accessible to all men of all ages. And He did it through the living teaching office of the Church, "*Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them...*", "*He who hears you hears me*". "*If they keep my word, they will keep yours*".

How is it, Thomas, that even this many arguments cannot sway you? I think I know why. Because you are more certain of one truth, which is not in the Scripture. You write:

The Holy Scripture, which is not like a man, which does not change...

This is one of your unshakable points, around which you guide your thinking. You are certain, that man is too feeble an element to be able to securely hand down the truth from one generation to the next. That which is written, is unshakable.

"*Littera scripta manet*" — "The written word remains." You hold onto that with all your might. And certainly, most would agree with you at this point. Even the Catholics, if they did not believe this:

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

1 Cor 1:27-29

How better can God try your obedience and humility if not by commanding to you something "silly", something which at first glance goes against the reason? In that case, prove your faith in God's power. Or do you not believe that God has power through "labile", unstable people to hand you infallibly his teachings? The case of Balaam from the Old Testament may sway you (Nm 22-24 Jude 11).

If God **only** commanded that which is pleasant (agreeable, convenient) to our intelligence, the reason for our obedience, that is personal God, would not have to be evident because the reason in this case could be just the intelligibility of the matter without the relationship to personal God. And God is interested in our love and not our shrewdness. So love means to do everything for the sake of Jesus, for the sake of His Person. To manifest that the reason of our actions is first of all His Person, it is necessary to do even that which is not agreeable to our mind. That is, we are acting on the basis of faith and not on the basis that our reason shows us necessity to do so.

I must get closer to this, because, I admit, I did not put it to you properly in the first letter. That is why you

write to me that I am contradicting myself. Under the things "that you cannot verify", I meant the mysteries of the Christian faith, since they and not the Ten Commandments are the subject of our faith.

As an example, let us take the mystery that you also believe in, the mystery of the Holy Trinity. One God, and three Persons. The fact that God, the Almighty Lord and Creator, exists, does not need Christ's revelation, because God's existence can be clearly perceived by human reason in the things that have been made (Rom 1:20). But, no one would ever realize that there are three Persons in that God. Even though we now know this, we cannot even now verify the substance of the fact with our reason. We cannot ever "put it together". To our reason, it is a seeming contradiction (paradox). But only a seeming one! Because we will never find a concrete clear contradiction in it. It would be a contradiction to say, for instance, there is just one God and three Gods as well.

So if God reveals to us the truth about three Persons, what can we say with our limited reason whether it is so or not. Thus we need to bow our reason before God's Reason. That's the greatest act of humility since one gives up what is most proprietary to him. That is the substance of faith. And that is also the substance of love, because love rests in relation between "I" and "YOU". And by faith we forfeit ourselves solely for the sake of "YOU".

I am not saying that God has "invented" the mysteries of our faith only to try our love. They in themselves, surely hide a fantastic harmony and beauty, even though they are now a paradox, as if nonsense to our reason.

Another great mystery for us is Jesus, God and man in one person. And even though the two natures, the divine and human, are not "mixed together" in Christ, on the basis of personal union, they are so incomprehensibly

closely bound, that whatever Jesus does as man, He does as God and vice versa. So we speak the truth when saying "God was crucified for us".

That is why Jews were so scandalized about Jesus; because they were certain that God would not let Himself be spit upon, scourged and crucified.

Further mystery, which I already mentioned, is the mystery of His body and blood under the species of bread and wine.

Next, the very Church is a great mystery. And in here also, is the mystery the incomprehensibly close bind with Christ. Christ and Church are one and the same.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

Jn 14:10

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.

Jn 14:20

...so that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us... so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one...

Jn 17:21-23

"...and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

Eph 5:32

Even though Church and Christ have the same Body, the persons are different. If in fact, there is just one Body,

If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it

1 Cor 12:26

and he who attacks that body, attacks all the persons who possess it.

I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

Act 9:5

Maybe, Thomas, you will say that all this is just a theorizing.

I do not think so.

The last goes along with the words of Jesus at the last judgment: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). The Catholic Church explains this in the meaning of that mystery and literally. Since you people cannot comprehend it, and you would like to please your reason (you do not know it is a question of faith), you help yourselves by using the words "as if". Thus, "you did as if for me". Surely such a "faith" encourages good deeds too. But to believe that whatever we do to another person, we do directly to Jesus, lifts one to a totally different endeavor. If for example, the faith of Mother Teresa in the mystery, was not that strong, she would probably have remained in Albania, raised three or four children, but then, thousands of lepers, sick, abandoned, tossed away children would have died without love and many of them in despair. But the thousands, who had or have felt the warmth of love, now give glory to the heavenly Father (Mt 5:16) to the fact that Mother Teresa believes in such a way as the Catholic Church teaches it and that she does not insert the words "as if". So, Thomas, it isn't the same what you believe and how you believe. Jesus Christ entrusted his truths to his Church and He gave her His Spirit.

But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.

Jn 16:13

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.

Jn 14:16

And He commanded her to teach.

Go... make disciples... teaching them to observe all

Mt 28:20

You, however, have despised her teaching authority, you have made infallible your reason and ended in such a way as a six-year old child would if someone gave him the best books but no teachers. From the entire Scripture, you left yourself certain only the basic moral law which was certain both to the pagans before Moses and the pagans of our days, who even recognize it by their mouths (to appear to be just) but do not fulfill it. Remember how you once started to read the Scripture with all your might in order to understand it and how everything ended. That is because you think that you must rely only on your own strength. God, in His goodness, gave you the Church, to lead you gradually by hand to fully understand the truths of the faith and with your cooperation, to perfection. But you're upset because you would have to be led by someone's hand. In this, Thomas, I see your whole problem. If only you would understand,

Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.

Mk 10:15

Even though I wanted to write about other matters that I consider important, I am not going into them because they do not belong substantially in the "picture" that I wanted to present to you. That which I originally meant to hand over to you, I have handed over to you. If you want to continue the dialogue, suffices it if you write even one thing in which, you think, your "picture" most contradicts mine.

In closing, here are "telegraphic" answers to some places in your letter:

✍ You write: *(The priests) think for the individual members of the church.*

✍ In part, you are right. If everyone were to be a theologian, where would that leave doctors, miners, scientists...? On the other hand, that is not true. Simple people have enough arguments to prove rationally the authority of the Catholic Church, that is, that She is sent by God. Her unity, holiness, universality, apostolicity are the witness to this. These are things that I partly mention in this letter.

✍ You write: *And they are the ones that have a "patent" on the Holy Spirit and thus the infallibility.*

✍ *"The gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."* Nothing destroys the Church as much as the false teachings in faith and morals. Thus the Church cannot err in faith and morals. That is indisputable logic. The question still is, which cases can infallibility be applied to? These are the ones:

1. The Pope, when he decides in the matters of faith and morals and this decision is binding to the entire Church.

2. The College of Bishops (that is not individual

bishops) unified under the Pope, is also infallible, whether acting solemnly in ecumenical councils or acting as ordinary and universal magisterium spread all over the world. In other words, those teachings are infallible which are taught commonly by all (morally all) the Catholic bishops. So the guarantee of infallibility does not apply to the priests.

In Scripture, every word is inspired. The living teaching office of the Church, is infallible only in regards to the questions of faith and morals. But that is enough so that everyone will not read his own faith and morals out of the Scripture.

✍ You write: *And that is the reason the individual members of the church do not study the Bible and do not know it.*

✍ It is not all so black! There are many Catholics who go to church every day. In the churches, the Scripture is read fully, once every three years.

✍ You write that by reading the Scripture, the person is filled with the Holy Spirit, and thus is brought to faith.

✍ I do not want to deny that the Holy Spirit is the cause of our faith. Not even that the Scripture can motivate you to faith. But there is still the unsolved problem, what and how to believe; because you are to believe everything, for example also the fact that "*The gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.*" So answer your own self at least, "Does the Holy Spirit enlighten Adventists infallibly or fallibly?"

The Holy Spirit will lead you only if you obey the Church. If at the Adventist's church everyone has the "patent" for the Holy Spirit, why can't at least the Pope have it in the Catholic Church?

I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit has the power to

make everyone be personally infallible while reading the Scripture. But the fact that he did not do it in that way, but did it in the way I'm telling you in this letter, I have no question about.

✍ You write: *The Catholic Church ... holds tradition as equal authority.*

✍ It is known only through the Tradition that the Scripture has authority. That is, it is inspired. And for this knowledge, you can thank the Catholic Church.

✍ You say: *Tradition and customs of people, this is a very wide concept.*

✍ If it is a "wide" concept, why won't you let it be explained to you?

✍ You also write: *Tradition ... has nothing in common with the first Christian church.*

✍ The Scripture affirms the opposite. I am citing your own Scripture:

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

2 Sol/Thes 2:15

✍ You ask: *How many people growing up in atheist families have been baptized in their adult life into Catholics? If the Catholic church did not baptize small children, how many of the same people would be baptized in their adult life?*

✍ I have met at least six who were baptized as adults. There are many more that I am not aware of. I have friends who for years lived without faith, and they converted as adults. Observing this, after you brought it to my attention, I am more than pleasantly surprised. For instance, in Cameroon half of all Catholics have accepted baptism as adults.

♪ You ask: *By what right, for example, does your priest or your Pope teach the church and explain to you the Gospel differently from the first people — writers?*

✎ The truth is only that the Church explains the Scripture differently than your own reason does. Whether then the Church is in agreement with the Scripture, I am writing you in this entire letter.

♪ You claim: *We explain the Scripture by the Scripture.*

✎ Please, notice the first two words!

♪ You write: *Satan works primarily against the authority of the Scripture.*

✎ Yes, against it also, but I would not say, “primarily”. The authority of the Scripture is claimed by you, Adventists, by the more than 25,000 other Christian churches, by the Orthodox and don’t forget, the Catholic Church has always claimed it. But the whole world fights against the authority of the Catholic Church and especially the Pope. You will not find in the whole world, an institution which has as many and as such powerful enemies as the Papacy has, nevertheless you will not find one that is as loved as She is.

✎ The Scripture, which Adventists have, is from the Catholic Church. The oldest manuscripts date to the fourth century (when according to Mrs. White, the Church did not exist) and even those would not be around if they were not preserved for you by the Catholic Church.

♪ You write: *The Church does not lead them to this either (reading the Scripture).*

✎ In our catechism it is also written: “Who soever reads the Scripture, with reverence to the word of God, and in the manner of spiritual reading, can gain partial

indulgences. Whoever does it at least half an hour, can gain plenary indulgences".

☞ You claim: *I am amazed that you still ignore such number of heresies that the Catholic Church has compiled throughout the centuries.*

☞ You would have to prove at least one.

☞ You ask: *Do you believe that I can gain, for instance, plenary indulgences and my sins will be forgiven? Not me!*

☞ Not me either, because sins are not forgiven by indulgences. Look at David whose sin was forgiven but the **punishment** for the sin remained (2 Sm 12:10-23). And so I also believe in purgatory. God protects the honour of man by making it possible for him to make a satisfaction.

☞ You write: *Man receives salvation for free because God is love. Man cannot merit it in any way!!!!*

☞ Approach the Catholic doctrine more humbly and you will learn that God's love, wisdom and strength even here unexpectedly surpass the human reason because it decided to give man heaven not as an "alms" but as a reward.

God... will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honour, and immortality through perseverance in good works.

Rom 2:5-7

And finally, Thomas, three more quotes from the Scripture:

And how have I deserved, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Lk 1:43

Behold, henceforth all the generations shall call me blessed.

Lk 1:48

And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Lk 2:35

So long!

Paul

Further objections of the Adventists

October

Hi Paul

First, a warm greeting to you. I received your letter, which prompts me to finally answer you. I owe you a great debt; an answer to your lengthy letter from approximately two years ago. Please forgive me that I am so late with the answer, but in order to write such letters, one needs a lot of free time and peace, neither of which I have an overabundance of. I am not going to answer all your questions at once; questions which you touched upon. I'll answer you gradually.

In your letter, you used a lot of arguments in defense of your faith, respectively the Catholic dogma and you also aired many important statements about dogma of the Adventist church. Your position as to the question of dogma, requires a clear answer. With God's help, I will attempt to gradually give you one and explain in detail, my belief, from the biblical point of view.

Untraditionally, I'll start from the back, practically from the end of your letter.

You write: "God protects the honour of man by

making it possible for him to make a satisfaction." Further, "Approach the Catholic doctrine more humbly and you will learn that God's love, wisdom and strength even here unexpectedly surpass the human reason because it decided to give man heaven not as "alms" but as a reward."

Even though all the questions in your letter are certainly important, my answer — first in this case — is to this important question because I believe that it is the life-important, cardinal to the understanding of salvation by a believer. This refers to whether a person is saved by faith or by works. I tell you openly, that I can't agree with you in principal, and plainly said, if someone believes that he will be saved by his deeds, it is a tragedy. The theme of justification and salvation could be written out on many pages, but I'll try to be material.

First of all, if you talk about salvation as an "alms", there can be no talk, just as similarly, there can be no talk of salvation as a reward. Nobody begged for salvation, nor do they beg now. Salvation was prepared long before creation and is only offered to man. If it weren't so, even if man begged for salvation, it would all be in vain, nothing would help him. Let us not even speak of the fact that the word "gift" and "merit" are mutually exclusive. If man could merit salvation, Jesus Christ's sacrifice would have been in vain.

God's verdict resounds, "reward for sin is death". Christ died for us and that is exactly the reason why we may live. That is actually the meaning of the Greek word (*katallage*) reconciliation, it means exchange, barter. That means that God at the time of reconciliation, exchanges Christ for us. He places [our] guilt and punishment on Christ and adds His (Christ's) justice on us. Reconciliation cannot be taken as some sort of appeasement of God.

Because it is not the people who reconcile God to themselves, it is God who reconciles the world to Himself (2 Cor 5:18-19).

Reconciliation is not only a sign of God's love, by which God wants to indicate that He is no longer angry with man; He also indicates that by removal (atoning) of guilt. This means that sin is not wiped out like some insignificant little mark on a blackboard. God would thus degrade His love and His law. In death, God's love to mankind is linked with God's holiness and realization of justice. God, through Christ, is Himself an arbitrator and a judge, in His mercy and in court. Since He wants to save us, He puts Himself in our place in court. Thus, in reconciliation, God stands in our spot and we stand in Christ's spot. Reconciliation is the fulfillment of God's mercy without detriment to His justice, because the price for mankind's salvation is to the full extent paid for by Christ's death, and by nothing human.

Simply put: reconciliation = salvation = Jesus died for me!

God's mercy is man's only hope (1 Pet 1:13). Man alone cannot by his own works change God's just verdict into excusable statement, because a sinner, with such unsatisfactory, and marked by sin, works, only wants to transplant against God, in order that he does not have to capitulate before Him. Man's honour, self-realization and thus first sin of false autonomy — pride — is at stake in "good works". He who wants to be justified from the Law (by the Law), reaches malediction (Gal 3:10-11).

Human merit and God's mercy exclude each other.

Man can and is to be saved by way of grace (Ef 2:8-9; Rom 4:16). This way of grace is exhibited in Christ's gospel of "joyful tidings", where there's an assurance

that God excuses man without his works, "for free", through faith (Jn 3:16).

We cannot make our own salvation, because God Himself, prepared it for us, but we can decide for salvation or refuse it — only that one thing depends on us.

In the Gospel, God confirms this mercy (salvation), for which no one has a claim, to all people and asks that people believe this gospel; that is believe in this promise (Mk 1:15), to take the Lord God at His word.

Lord God, at all times linked the salvation of man with faith (justification through faith: Rom 3:21; Rom 4:3, 6-7). Works as means of salvation, are excluded (Rom 3:20,28; Rom 11:6; 2 Tim 1:9).

What role do the works, which God's word requests of man, play (Mt 5:16)? We can't exclude them from Christian life, because they prove our faith. Where man is joined by faith to Christ, there exist works that answer to this faith (Gal 5:6). However, these works originate from faith (1 Tes 1:3), and are, as faith itself is, a work of God, not man. Good works then, are not means to salvation, they are its consequence!!!!

Martin Luther: "Good, pious works never make a person good and pious, but a good, pious person does make good works."

All the good works of a Christian are works of Christ, who lives in him through the Holy Spirit (Gal 2:20), God performs them (Is 26:12), they are a gift of God (1 Cor 4:7) and are acted not for the honour of man (Lk 17:10), only for God's honour (Psalm 115:1).

Works then, are thus, "test, seal and fruit" of faith.

In closing: Salvation is from faith, not works, and you cannot merit it in any way!!!!

Teachings about salvation from works, or about

"merited salvation", is an audacious heresy and I advise you, with my best intention, to leave it — as long as you truly believe it.

In the near future, I'll express my statement to the other questions in your letter.

Bye,

Thomas

P.S. Excuse my chicken scratch. In the meantime, we have moved again. I'm enclosing the new address.

If you're in the area, drop by.

Answer to the objections

October 11

Greetings, Thomas!

As you can see, it sure took a long time again. I am answering your letter dated more than two years ago. I started to write the answer as soon as I received your letter, but then I stopped, and when I recently came across it and found out that the main part was already written, I was amazed that I did not have to write too much to finish it off. Knowing this and time flying by, gave me the push I needed and compelled me to finally finish writing and send it to you. Here it is.

With God's help, let us get to the matter.

We're dealing with the question of justification and salvation. You reacted to this question, even though it was only a telegraphic answer, as a filler to the substantial thought of my first letter. It does not matter, because I, myself, agreed to have you answer any question you decided on, any question that most contradicts your views. By this I mean, that through that "telegraphic" answer, I was not able to produce a satisfactory picture of the Catholic teaching in this matter, and that a short

answer like that may contribute to misunderstandings, as it obviously did.

When you wrote me that nobody ever begged for salvation, that salvation was prepared long before creation, you did not understand what I was trying to tell you. The fact that God prepared salvation from eternity is well known to me, too. I never thought that salvation, for all its worth, was just an "alms". To crave for what salvation is offering to us, would never occur to us, let alone have us beg for it.

Therefore, when I mentioned "alms" in connection with salvation, I did not think of the above mentioned explanations, I wanted to show you that man feels like a beggar if he does not have a chance to pay back. It is a great humiliation for man, if he must powerlessly receive and is unable to give anything back. Thomas, how many times in life have you come across a situation where people refused even a very expensive gift (maybe because it was expensive!) with a reason: "I am not a beggar!" We can often recognize the same way of acting in ourselves, and we don't think anything bad of it. To man, it is a very painful humiliation, if he must always receive, and has no chance to properly thank or repay, simply said, when he is like a beggar. In this case, it is of no help to say that God is love, because quite the opposite is true: the more expensive the gift, the more miserable man feels, the more demeaned and thus more humiliated.

How many has the Devil tempted exactly in this manner, when he says to them: "God is giving you great gifts, to humiliate you, to make you feel that in His eyes, you are nothing but a beggar". And I'm convinced, Thomas, that there is no shortage of the ones who hate God exactly because they succumbed to this temptation. If these people had more patience, and were able to recognize, what the Church teaches about it, they would certainly

love God today too. Because the truth would have set them free from this diabolical temptation, too (Jn 8:32).

Man, as a creature, cannot have any demands on God. If he glorifies Him and fulfills His commandments, that is reward enough. He has no legal claim to anything else. Man even sinned on top of that. Since the insult is measured by the goodness and majesty of the person that it is meant to insult, then the insult would be infinite, because God's goodness and His majesty are infinite. Even if man was capable of such an infinite insult, he is not capable of infinite satisfaction, because satisfaction is measured by the person who is giving it. And it is for that reason that man cannot outweigh by anything else the insult that he caused. If he sacrificed to God one thousand ox, and fed and clothed all the poor in the world, and died the worst death himself, he would not be able to satisfy the insult. That's why you, Thomas, are right about cautioning me in your letter, that no one can be justified from the works of the law.

Man cannot help himself in any way in this state of being turned away from God. Whatever is not possible to man, is possible to God. God sent His Son, to reconcile the world with Himself, as you also mentioned. The second divine Person, the Word, became man. It is necessary to point out that God did not take soil, let say, from the Himalayas, to create the new Adam-Christ, as He once made the first, but He made Him from woman (Gal 4:4), so He could be one of us. In this way he could give satisfaction for us.

In mankind, there exists a mysterious, incomprehensible unity, which unites all Adam's children. This unity surpasses all of our comprehension, as it is evident from the fact, that not only do we inherit the consequences of Adam's sin, we inherit the sin itself.

Therefore, just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned — for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam.

Rom 5:12-14

Indeed, in guilt was I born, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalms 51:7

What can be said about this, Thomas? Man is tempted to grumble and to incite. Here, you can see evidence that God's ways are not man's ways and that His thoughts are not our thoughts.

It is from this human race that God the Son takes human nature, to prevent mankind from falling into hell's abyss and point mankind in the opposite direction. Since His Person is divine, human nature, which He carries, cannot have even a trace of sin. Divinity inevitably excludes sin. This Man is therefore, a new man, a new creation. And whoever joins onto Him through faith and baptism, becomes a new creation in Him, not just renewed, but a new and more perfect creation, than Adam first was, because in this way he becomes a divinized man:

But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many.

Rom 5:15

Thus, whatever man gained in Christ is much greater than that, which he lost in Adam. He must realize this gain by being born anew of water and Spirit, that is, he

will believe and he will let himself be baptized. By being born again in baptism, we become one body with Christ (1 Cor 12:13), and a new mankind rises. Here, it is starting to become clear to us, because that mysterious and terror-rousing unity, which brought us sin in Adam, brings us grace in Christ, an even greater grace than the one we lost in Adam.

The second divine Person took on human nature. Divine Person is the innermost "basis" of that human nature. The unity between them is above all and every thought. Incomprehensible closeness of that unity comes from the fact that if we point to that Man, we must say: God. And as He is God, that means it isn't possible for that Man to have sin. In baptism, we become one body with Him:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body

1 Cor 12:13

And if the Scripture says that we are one body with Him, this is not some pettifogging, it is the truth in its deepest substance. This unity of us in Christ's body, is again way beyond our comprehension, because through it, we are united with divinity in such a way that His holiness, His justice, is compellingly passed onto us. And that is the internal principle of justification.

You're right, Thomas, when you say that God gives us Christ's justice. [But] It would be wrong, if you thought [just] of some external bargain [or: exchange] without this internal principle.

In the mystical body of Christ, we are in such oneness with Jesus, that if the heavenly Father wanted to reject someone, He would have to reject Jesus. And that is not possible.

...so that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me

and I in you, that they also may be in us... so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me...

Jn 17:21,23

And it is for this same reason that the heavenly Father cannot reject works, that we do in Christ, because that would mean rejecting the works of Christ. Yes, these same works are at the same time our works and those of Christ. No, Thomas, this does not contradict our reason, — it surpasses its comprehension.

It is similar to the creation of the world, which is a work of all three Persons. Not that the Father created one third of the creatures, the Son one third and The Holy Spirit one third, but Father is the Creator, same as the Son is the Creator and also the Holy Spirit is the Creator of exactly the same creation.

It similarly goes on in Christ's body, where the believer is a living member. Those same works that we do, are at the same time our works and works of Christ. And if they are Christ's works, then they are divine. Thus, in a sense of the word, we have become co-creators with God. And so, in the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, our similarity with God becomes most evident.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.

Gn 1:27

If this had been said about the first Adam, the same applies to the fullest of the second Adam — Christ, of whom the first one was only a foreshadowing (Rom 5:14). In Him then, in His Incarnated Word, God has also made us participants in His divine works. That's why it is written:

You are gods.

Jn 10:34

And you know, Thomas, that the Scripture cannot be set aside.

This then, Thomas, is the basis of the Catholic doctrine about merits. And for such works one deserves divine reward, that is eternal.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

Jn 15:1n

According to your understanding, Thomas, man is saved by mere faith. This is evident even from the fact, that it was the only thing in your letter that you underlined twice! Works, according to you are only there to prove the faith. In the closing remarks of your letter, you write:

Works then, are thus, "test, seal and fruit" of faith.

According to you, it looks like this: A vine grower came to the vineyard, looked at the nice fruit and said to himself, "What magnificent fruit! This means that the vineyard is good." According to you, the fruit would have fulfilled its function. The vine grower should then pick the fruit, throw it in the garbage and then sit and enjoy the fact that he has a good vineyard.

That's a compulsory conclusion to your comprehension. But you can see how it screams nonsense.

The following and main conclusion of your conception is that if works only show faith, then I must ask: "How many works should there be?"

I imagine you could tell me: Keep the Ten commandments!

Thomas, here I must firstly say that not to sin (the Ten Commandments express it), does not mean any fruit, and second, that I show my faith by giving \$30 to a poor man, but also by giving him \$500. The twig is good if it brought a 3-pound cluster of grape, but also if it only brought 1-pound cluster.

Your (and Protestant on the whole) doctrine in this matter, "does not force" man to bigger and better performance, because according to it, the reward for faith is the same. I know, you could tell me that you're doing it on account of love, and the Catholics have less honourable reasons for doing the same. That would only mean that you do not know man's psyche, nor divine pedagogy, nor philosophy, which states that nothing is without a sufficient reason. I won't take this apart theoretically at this point.

Reality speaks for itself: Show me at least one Adventist who would forsake everything in this life, in order to, for example, dedicate his/her entire life to the lepers. In the Catholic Church, there are hundreds of thousands of them. And you can be sure that they would not be able to do that, if they were doing it without love and faith, purely for the "merit". The truth is, it can't be denied that in a believer, the motive for merit passes through an evolution from the first imperfect form right up to finding that the basis of the greatness of merit, will lie in the greatness of love, with which we will love God in heaven. Yes, everyone who is saved will own the whole God for eternity (that is that one *denarius* — Mt 20:1n), but each one will enjoy God only to the extent to which he worked here on earth:

Take charge of ten cities... You take charge of five cities.

Lk 19:17,19

However, I don't think that lepers (of any kind) will be interested in this theory, they will be more interested in whether anyone will show them works of love or not.

Again, I repeat what I wrote you in my first letter: What and how a person believes, is not the same. The right and less right teaching has its reflection in practical life. No, Thomas, works are not a secondary matter, they're not less than faith, quite the opposite, they're more than faith:

If I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

1 Cor 13:2

Saint John says, that under love, we need to think works (deeds); he writes:

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

1 Jn 3:18

The Scripture talks of "all faith", and still nothing is valid! Faith will pass away, but love will never end (1 Cor 13:8). Faith is only a base, a trampoline, which helps us to get up into height, which help us to act, that is to do works of love. The arrow does not point from works to faith, but from faith to works.

I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and your fruit should remain.

Jn 15:16

• "Remain"! If it remains, then it is eternal. And that is the merit. Faith will pass away. How then, can that which passes away be worth more than that which remains?

Thomas, I did not want to break the thread of thought, which I started in this letter, and that's why I'm just getting to that which immediately caught my eye the first time I read your letter. **You do not distinguish that justification and salvation (eternal reward) are not completely one and the same.**

When the Scripture says about justification apart from works of law, it says that, man can in no way extricate himself alone from the state of ungraciousness. Here, the words that otherwise grace would no longer be grace, are valid. Man has neither strength, nor ability, to become a living limb of Christ's body — justified. If, however, he is already in the state of being justified, he is the limb of Christ, he is able to do meritorious works. He has the ability to co-operate in his own salvation.

In order for man to be justified, he can give nothing of his own. No works, which he performs, have such value as to be able to outweigh the greatness of the insult, which was dealt to God. If without his own merits through grace of God, he was justified, that is, was grafted to the stem of the Vine (Rom 11:17), to Christ, in Him his works gain value, which is pleasing to the heavenly Father yet. They are values, in which the heavenly Father takes delight, and which are rewarded. Clad in these values we are no longer naked in front of the heavenly Father (1 M 3:7), we are no beggars. It is still a grace, but our merit also comes to it.

It is still a grace because an offspring does not produce an ounce of fruit, unless the vine stem supplies everything to it, and it is also a merit because the whole cluster is the result of the work of an offspring as well. That same fruit, is also a product of the root and product of the offspring.

Surely you know, Thomas, that Jesus Himself used the picture. And just like no picture can present the full

being of a pictured matter (thing), because it is simply a picture, the same way this one also cannot. With the picture of the vine, Jesus only brings nearer the reality of oneness between us and Him. The depth of this oneness is beyond all our comprehension, our reason will never explore it, and that's why the results, which come out of this oneness, are better left to faith. Merit is exactly such a consequence.

Our reason will never penetrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity, where three Persons are one Being — God, it will never penetrate the mystery of God-Man, where one person is a perfect God, as well as a perfect man, thus simultaneously suffering and infinitely blessed. It will not penetrate the mystery of the Church, which continues to be a living Christ on earth (Acts 22:8). It will not penetrate the co-operation of God's will and our will, where our will remains free in spite of the fact that God causes even our own wants:

For it is God who of his good pleasure works in you both the will and the performance.

Phil 2:13

You "ran into" this last problem yourself, even if you did not realize it. In one spot, you write:

We can decide for salvation or refuse it — only that one thing depends on us.

But to "decide for salvation", according to your own words, means to believe. And so you said that faith depends on us. A few lines later, you write:

Faith itself is a work of God, not man.

In the first place, you claim, that to believe, to decide for salvation, depends on us, and shortly afterwards, that it is a work of God. Thus, this is a clear contradiction, which infers that somewhere in the reasoning, there is an error.

I repeat, that the way of co-operation of God's will and our will, is to our reason a mystery. Similarly, merits that are connected to it, are also a mystery. Those same works are to the fullest extent, the result of God and our results. When the Revelation (yes, preserved above all, in the Bible) assures us of it, we cannot question it. Otherwise it would point to pride, which does not recognize, does not accept, that is, does not believe that which it does not understand. Mysteries and their consequences, are the reason why faith is so hard! To believe, even if the reason at first glance, thinks that certain facts contradict each other. This, however, is where it is evident, that God's reality surpasses created reality. Created reason cannot comprehend the uncreated Reason — God.

Who may know what forms of beings exist there? What do you know about the fullness of being? Many times, when man thinks, that something contradicts itself, it is just because he left out something from the being, he does not know about some reality.

Imagine the travellers in the old days, who several times travelled from Europe, across Asia to China. And furthermore, imagine, that when these travellers are all set for their journey, someone tells them, "Turn around 180 degrees and go to China!" What do you think they would tell him? What would they say, if someone told them to face "away" from China with the promise that they will reach China? I think, that they would not say anything, they would just point their finger to their forehead and wonder if he has any brain working in his head at all.

And in spite of all that, they would be wrong. Because they left out something from the being — the fact that the Earth is round. They would not know that to go to China east or west, is not a contradiction. From earthly

perspective, the Earth is level, from heavenly perspective, it is round. From man's perspective, many things are impossible, from God's perspective, they are possible.

Indubitable contradiction would be, if we say, that by following this direction, one can, but at the same time cannot reach China. It is not a contradiction, though, if we say that one can go to China this way and one can reach it going the opposite way. Similarly, it would be a contradiction to say that we have, but also do not have free will. Though, it isn't a contradiction if we say that our will is free, but its wish is also to the fullest measure the result of God's will.

In our case, it would be a contradiction to say that our works are ours, but because Christ is doing them, they are not ours. But it isn't a contradiction when we say that those exact same works are our deeds and at the same time, Christ's.

Notice: If we speak of contradiction, **"yes"** and **"no"**, **"is"** and **"isn't"**, stand **against** each other. In mysteries, nevertheless, which the Catholic Church clearly submits, **2x "is", two times "yes"**, stand **side by side**. That is "super-measure", "over-measure", or fullness of being and not a contradiction.

As long as we live here on earth, our reason cannot seize, understand this co-existence, co-being. These are proper terms, because to talk of only contemporary existence means that two realities **"ARE"** at the same time. New York and Paris are, for example, in the same time frame, but our reason can see nothing incomprehensible in that. But we are talking about **"CO-being"**, **"CO-existence"**. Three Persons in God co-exist, they are one being.

So, when I mentioned earlier, that two times **"is"** stand **"side by side"** each other, I expressed myself a little

bit imprecisely, because it is even better said: "IN" each other. Notice, for example, that the Scripture tells that we are justified "in" Christ, not "for" Christ or "for Christ sake".

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ... so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

2 Cor 5:19,21

This, Thomas, is not, as I said before, some sort of outer exchange without an inner principle.

At first creation, God created according to His own substance, which is one. At the new creation, so to say, He extends into the creation also His Trinitarian Mystery. In this lies the first reason and the origin of Christian mysteries.

The mysteries of Christianity are like mountain ridges. Whoever walks on them should follow the mountain guide. Whoever does not hold onto the guide, may get dizzy and fall to the left or to the right of the ridge. Many have already climbed to the ridge, but when they realized where they were standing, their head started spinning, and they fell and broke their bones. For example, when Calvin stood atop the mountain ridge, on one side of the mountain he saw the writing: "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him*" (Jn 6:44). On the other side he saw man's free will. It seemed incompatible to him, so he leaned to one side at the expense of the other side, because the first one seemed more secure, but he lost his balance and by logical deduction, taking into account only the first side, he fell into the abyss, which is called: "Absolute predestination to hell or heaven, without taking into account man's striving." Broken bones, that is practical results, clearly state that there occurred an error somewhere along the way. Centuries ago, Pelagianists fell from this same

mountain, but they fell to the opposite side. They thought man's freedom was a much too evident matter, than one can deny. They took the step to the "more secure" side, but they also fell into an abyss. This is called: "To make a decision for heaven, man does not need God's grace. The decision for heaven is not in God's power, but it depends on man alone."

Now there is between them the impenetrable barrier of the mountain massive. If they had been holding onto *the guide*, they could continue walking in union, and they would delight in the sight of the harmony of the mountain ridges.

One more example.

In the first centuries, Arius, Docetists and others were walking on the mountain ridge called Christ's God-Manhood. "One Person both God and Man? That's nonsense! How could God be crucified?!" — This is how Arius may have been thinking. He denied Christ's Divinity and leaned only into the side of Christ's Humanity. But he ended up in the abyss, which is called "Christ is only a man". Today, there are even Jehovah's witnesses in that abyss. Docetists thought it was surer that Christ is God, since according to them, Christ did not have a true body during His earthly existence, but merely a bodily appearance. They leaned away from the reality of His human nature and fell over the other side.

Our ridge, Thomas, ties into the first example. On the one hand, we see that good works are God's doing, but on the other hand, that they are our doing.

We could continue on with the examples.

Christian mysteries are realities then, which our mind cannot put together, our mind cannot see the "knot", which ties these realities.

I assume, Thomas, that we could object: What I once recognized, that is not a mystery for me any more. Since Christ once revealed God's intention with us, mysteries do not exist. "Mysteries do not exist", Jehovah's witnesses once told me. Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, writes:

When you read this you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to human beings in other generations as it has now been revealed...

Eph 3:4-5

A little further, he writes:

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

Eph 5:32

How can we comprehend these statements, where in one, Paul says about his "insight into the mystery" and in the other, that "this is a mystery"?

In the first excerpt, we look at the fact that if it weren't revealed to us, that Christ and the Church (in the given instance) are one, we would never come to that conclusion. It would be a mystery to us. The fact that the two are one, is now well known to us, we already know this *fact*, but mysterious for us remains the "knot", *modus* of the union. That is why the apostle says "it is the great mystery". When he says that **he has "insight" into the mystery**, he is thinking of the *fact*, when he says **it "is a great mystery"**, he thinks of the *modus*, the manner of his existence.

It is something similar to a company surprising the public with a new machine. People are smitten and awed by what the machine is capable of doing, but its construction remains a mystery. At the exhibition, the

mystery of the machine's existence is revealed, but the mystery of its principle remains. Or better yet, try taking a hydraulic excavator among a primitive tribe of people in the jungle and start digging! Those people would stand there in awe, that something like that *exists*. The existence of that machine since then, would not be a mystery to them, but the principle on which the machine operates, would still remain a mystery. We should add that this mystery would not be a hindrance to the natives, not to be able to sit at the wheel of the machine and operate it after some instructions. These natives would not need to know the principle on which the gasoline motor works, or the laws of hydraulics, to be able to dig the foundations for their houses. Similarly, we do not need to know how, for example, Christ's Body and Blood function for eternal life (Jn 6:51). It should be sufficient that we know the existence of this reality through faith, that we know (also through faith), where to "find" His Body and Blood, and when we accept it worthily. And so we are able to dig the foundations of our eternal house, without knowing and seeing the internal "mechanism".

With these lines, Thomas, in fact, I foreanswer to the objection, that to know the mysteries would be a waste for us. An excavator would not be a waste for the natives, even if they don't know its principle, just as similarly as a car is not a waste for any woman, even if she has no idea what goes on under the hood.

In mysteries, God revealed to us their existence, next their significance, and their **mutual harmony**, which we even now start to comprehend. Example: Christ forgave sins, Church also forgives sins (Jn 20:23) because Church and Christ are one. Mary is the Mother of all believers because every believer is one body with Christ, but that body was born of Mary. And so on.

Christ's mysteries, Thomas, are objects of faith, and not the Ten Commandments. There is nothing to believe in the Ten commandments.

For example, what is there to believe in the commandment "You shall not kill!"? "I believe, you shall not kill?" What sense does that make.

I think, Thomas, that this is the main thing that I wanted to tell you. If I wrote too much, about the meaning of Christian mysteries, it is because I consider it important. Those who separated from the Catholic Church, by the fact that they were left to their own strength, lost their balance and got hold of one or the other side of the truth. Convert Maritain is correct when he says, that people normally have the truth in that which they confirm, and are wrong in that which they deny.

I don't doubt, Thomas, that much of that which the Adventists teach you, is nice and you like it. But don't forget, Thomas, when a stone breaks off a cliff, by falling, it breaks into many smaller and smaller pieces. That, which appeals to you in the Adventist doctrine, and attracts you to it, is only a small piece of the Catholic truth, which still has remained in the Adventist church. It is a "gilt" of the piece, why you believe the rest, that the spirit of the lie talks you into against the Catholic Church. When he noticed that you are accessible to truth, that you are looking for and yearning for it, when he saw that there is a "danger", that you will find it in the Catholic Church, he chose the lesser evil for himself and pulled you to the Adventists. When he saw that he would not be totally successful in denying you the access to the truth, he threw you its morsel, with which he lured you away from its fullness. It sounds paradoxically, when I say: the spirit of Adventism is deceiving you with Catholic truth.

In conclusion, Thomas, let us look at the Scripture, and what it says on the theme of merits! To which church does it attribute truth?

But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever.

Dan 12:3

- Even here, in the Old Testament, it is said, that not all believers will achieve the same degree of beatitude. If some "*shall be like the stars forever*," it will be because they lead many to justice, that is they merited it.

Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

Mt 6:1

- Thus, if we perform our deeds because of God, we will receive a reward. We will receive reward for good deeds. The reward will be in heaven because our Father is in heaven.

When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Mt 6:3-4

- For alms He will repay you.

When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

Mt 6:6

- For a prayer, you will gain merit, reward.

When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father... And your Father... will repay you.

Mt 6:17-18

- For fasting He will repay you.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroy.

Mt 6:19-20

- If merits, Thomas, do not exist, how can one store up treasures in heaven? The word "store up" says, that you can collect more or less. You store step by step. If merits do not exist, and God gives heaven as a single-matter reward for faith, then it should be written, "Store up treasure in heaven." The Scripture, though, says, "Store up treasures in heaven." So for alms, prayer, fasting... you will receive a permanent reward in heaven.

Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mt 5:19

- So, I ask: Are works the reason why one will be greater in heaven and the other smaller?

The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Mt 11:11

- What is the reason that one is smaller and another is greater? Why are they not all equal?

The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.

Mt 7:2

- If merits do not exist, what is the meaning of these words? Why this appeal to man to strive? See also Mt 20:27 in connection with this.

If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.

Mk 9:35

- Jesus does not condemn the effort for primacy, but gives it the correct purport.

Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

Mk 9:41

- “Will surely not lose”, thus it is eternal.
- It will be a reward for a “cup of water”. If a cup of water will be rewarded in eternity, why would not other deeds of love be rewarded?

If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

Mt 19:21

- Of what good does he need greater perfection if in eternity, according to you people, it would have no reflection?! In order for him to enter into life, all he needed were the Ten commandments, which he kept (cf. verse 20).

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Jn 15:13

- What meaning would this *greater* love here on earth have, if it did not have reflection in a greater love in heaven as well?

Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food...

Mt 25:31f

- Thomas, how can you say: NOT FOR works, when Jesus clearly says, "FOR you gave me food".

Now he who plants and he who waters are one, yet each will receive his own reward according to his labor

1 Cor 3:8

- "Each will receive his own reward according to his labor". Does it need a comment, Thomas?

If anyone builds on this foundation (Christ) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light... If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage.

1 Cor 3:12-14

- As you can see, it's man's merit, whether he builds from gold or silver or...

The treasure and wealth of the nations will be brought there (into the New Jerusalem)

Rev 21:26

- What is this "treasure and wealth" if not the merits of the saved ones?!

*"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."
"Yes," said the Spirit, "let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them."*

Rev 14:13

- When the Holy Spirit says "their" works, one would contradict the Scripture, if he said that those are "not their" works. But as I mentioned, Thomas, obviously

those same works are Christ's works as well. Because Jesus said, "*Without me you can do nothing*" (Jn 15:5). God can reach His goal even without us, but we cannot reach it without Him. That's why we need to say, "*We are unprofitable servants*" (Lk 17:10).

Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his works.

Rev 22:12

- If the reward for more or less good works was the same, it would be a lie to say, that it is a reward according to works. And it is a reward "according to... WORKS".

- Jesus does not say He would make a present according to the works, but that He would "recompense". Reward is a matter of justice, gift is a matter of a good will.

He who is holy, let him be hallowed still.

Rev 22:11

- "Holy" means justified here. But if merits do not exist, what meaning would it have to strive to be hallowed still more?! This commandment would be a nonsense if a greater sanctity would have no reflection in eternity. If it would only have a meaning here on earth, it would contradict Jesus' words, who says, "Do not gather treasures on earth".

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works.

Jas 2:22

- Here, Thomas, I just want to say, that I have no intention of separating faith from works, because they are closely connected. I do not want to again stress, that the arrow points from faith to works and not the other way around, (because not their faith, but "*their works*"

accompany them").), but I do want to say that even if you insisted that deeds are a manifestation of faith and for faith, man will be rewarded, it is still up to man whether he will gain greater or lesser degree of glory in heaven (whether you look at it as greatness of faith, or greatness of deeds). Thus it validates the Catholic doctrine of merits.

- Here on earth, people are jealous because the riches in others appear to them as something casually given, as a blind destiny of Lady Luck. In heaven, jealousy will not be possible. One reason is that everyone will see that the luck of others is fully justified, and also because we will be one Body and one Blood, and relatives are not jealous of each others' riches and glory. They wish it to one another. And lastly, nobody will be capable of greater happiness, than the one he will have use of. Saint Teresa says that whatever container one will prepare for oneself, and whatever container he will enter into heaven with, that's the container that he will have filled. Whether someone comes with a small container, or a big container, each container will be overflowing with an infinite ocean of God's happiness. After all, the Scripture says:

A good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.

Lk 6:38

Hi!

Paul

Brief Review

Saturday

We can look at Saturday from three perspectives:

- A) Periodicity (number of days in the cycle, rhythm)
- B) Content (substance) of Sabbath day.
- C) Placement (position) of the Sabbath day in the week.

A) Periodicity

It is possible to ask oneself: How many days should be in a week? How often should the day repeat itself, the day in which man stops worrying about temporary life and observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in his heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship as a sign of His universal beneficence to all?

Why are there exactly seven days? It is possible to imagine that there could be more or less days. After the French Revolution, there was an attempt for a ten-day week, which failed.

Since there is no dispute about the seven-day week, suffice it if we just realize that along with the question of Saturday, there is also this dimension. We don't have to busy ourselves with it.

B) Content

We have already mentioned the question of the content or spirit of the seventh day. Man has inscribed in his heart a command to render to God visible and public worship. Since this imperative of conscience springs from human nature itself, it isn't possible to change it, because human nature has not changed either. There must be a time when man gives that worship to God.

C) Placement

Our issue only relates to this third perspective, which relates to the place of the Sabbath day in the frame of the seven-day cycle of the week. This mere sequence, position in the week, falls in no way under the natural moral law, in other words, it does not flow from human nature, and thus the change of position cannot be antinatural.

This placing, sequence is in no way a trial from God, because:

The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.

Mk 2:27

Nevertheless, the sequence, the position of the sabbath day in the week has its meaning. Saturday represented the completion of the first creation (Ex 20:11) as well as the Old Covenant (Ex 31:16). Also, it was a shadow, a figure to the New Covenant reality (as well as the Old Testament whole is such):

Therefore let no one, pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Col 2:16-17

Saturday, as the Old Testament prefiguration (shadow, type), was fulfilled by the death of Jesus Christ. Thus it stopped having further basis. Even Adventists themselves acknowledge Saturday as a shadow of the New Testament reality. They themselves have accepted Catholic theology of type-antitype (shadow-reality).

They published a book: *"Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines"* (392 pp., 1989 — In any further reference to it, it will be referred to as SDAB) The book is in fact their catechism. They themselves recognize that after the fulfillment of a shadow, the shadow is "no longer necessary". Speaking of the true Lamb of God, for instance, they say:

The true Lamb of God was sacrificed at Calvary as a ransom for our sins (1 Peter 1:19), type met antitype, and shadow melded into reality. The earthly sanctuary services were no longer necessary (SDAB p. 42).

They also say:

These sacrifices were not sufficient... They were simply a shadow of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1; cf. 9:9,23,24)... The ascending cloud of incense in the holy place of the Temple typifies Christ's merits, prayers... (SDAB p. 53).

Regarding Saturday, they say:

When Christ finished His work of Creation... He rested on the seventh day... Following His death, He rested in a tomb... (SDAB p. 253)

However, it should be said that the explanation of Saturday as a type does not have any origin with them because they took it over from the Catholic Church, which on Easter Saturday has been prayed following prayer for over a thousand years :

This day was symbolically foreshadowed by the great

Moses, when he said: "And God blessed the seventh day." For this is the blessed Sabbath; this is the day of resting, because on this day rested from all his labor the only-begotten Son of God; in this respect, death became a Sabbath rest; then, returning to what HE IS, by His resurrection He gave us, too, eternal life; for He is good, and He loves mankind.

Byzantine Catholic vespers stichera for Holy Saturday

Sunday

The Holy Scripture does not indicate whether it was Jesus Christ, who commanded His Church to change the observation of His day from the seventh day to the first day of the week, or whether She did it of her own accord. It seems that She, without expecting a "command", inspired by Her love and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, did it on Her own by the authority given to Her, in order to celebrate the greatest day of her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Christ's Church has the right to do it, since She was given unlimited authority:

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Mt 18:18

The Church did not abolish the content (substance) of Saturday, did not change that, by which it "was made for man". She only changed its place in the week, and with that, its symbolism.

Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week" Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. Because it is the "eighth day" following the sabbath, it symbolizes the

new creation ushered in by Christ's Resurrection. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day (he kuriake hemera, dies dominica) — Sunday:

Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 2174

The sabbath, which represented the completion of the first creation, has been replaced by Sunday which recalls the new creation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 2190

Adventists say:

And as long as we worship God because He is our Creator, so long will the Sabbath function as the sign and memorial of Creation (SDAB p. 255).

OK. But we know that there are indisputably two Creations, a fact which is proved by the very Bible.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

2 Cor 5:17

For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation.

Gal 6:15

Since there are two distinguished Creations, there have to be two distinguished days to commemorate them. The Old Creation is commemorated by Saturday, the New Creation by Sunday.

Sunday and the Bible — New Testament

The Church did not change Old Testament Saturday to Sunday in the year 313, as the Adventists insist, but kept Sunday as Holy right from the beginning.

On the first day of the week when we gathered for the breaking of bread...

Acts 20:7

This change was not done by force, in a cut, since this did not deal with natural moral law.

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord.

Rom 14:5-6

The inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews totally undermines the emphasis given to Saturday by Adventists when he writes:

For somewhere he spoke of the seventh day thus, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."

Heb 4:4

It is as if he did not know where in the Bible it is written. Since we cannot admit the author's ignorance of the matter, we have to admit that he meant something by that. Actually, the Holy Spirit, the primarily Author of the Scripture, wishes by that expression to say something to us (or better to the Adventists).

Sunday and the Church Fathers

Preserved texts of the early Church Fathers also certify this fact.

We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day [after the Jewish sabbath, but also the first day] when God, separated matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead.

St. Justin Martyr († 165), I Apol. 67: PG

Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the sabbath, but the Lord's Day, in which our life is blessed by him and by his death.

St. Ignatius of Antioch , a martyr († 110), Ad Magn. 9,1

Sunday and the Bible - Old Testament

Psalm 118 talks of a day in which we should rejoice. It is the day, which is in direct connection with the Messiah, that is, Jesus Christ.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the Lord has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice in it.

Ps 118:22-24

- What is "wonderful in our eyes" if not the Resurrection?

In the description of the celebration of the feast of Passover, the Scripture, in the Book of Leviticus, says:

*When you come into the land which I am giving you, and reap your harvest, you shall bring a sheaf of **THE FIRST FRUITS** of your harvest to the priest, who shall wave the sheaf before the Lord that it may be acceptable for you. **ON THE DAY AFTER THE SABBATH** the priest shall do this... This shall be a perpetual statute for you and your descendants wherever you dwell. Beginning with **the day after the sabbath**, the day on which you bring the wave-offering sheaf, you shall count seven full weeks, and then **on the day after the seventh week**, the fiftieth day, you shall present the new cereal offering to the Lord... On this same day you shall by proclamation have a sacred assembly, and no sort of*

work may be done. This shall be a perpetual statute for you and your descendants wherever you dwell.

Lv 23:9-21

Saint Paul explains, that the first fruits of harvest, the first sheaf, represented the Risen Jesus Christ.

But as it is, Christ is now raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... Just as in Thomas all die, so in Christ all will come to life again, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming, all those who belong to him.

1 Cor 15:20

Thus in the above spot of the Leviticus (about Easter and Pentecost), we are given the prefigure of Sunday.

We can see from all of the above citations from the Bible that Adventists err when saying:

Nowhere does the Bible command us to observe any weekly day other than the Sabbath. It declares no other weekly day blessed or holy (SDAB p. 254)

And similarly their next statement is not true.

...not one writer of the second and third centuries ever cited a single Bible verse as authority for the observance of Sunday in the place of the Sabbath. Neither Barnabas, nor Ignatius, nor Justin, nor Irenaeus, nor Tertulian, nor Clement of Rome, nor Clement of Alexandria, nor Origen, nor Cyprian, nor Victorius, nor any other author who lived near to the time when Jesus lived knew of any such instruction from Jesus or from any part of the Bible (SDAB p. 259).

☞ We can say: To get an instruction, commandment from Jesus to observe Sunday would be for His Bride the same as if a husband commanded his wife to celebrate his feast day. He expects that she finds it out for herself.

☞ To say that the Church Fathers did not know of any argument from the Bible just because that small part of their writings which has remained does not mention it, is a very weak argument. From their writings we just know what they did know, not what they did not know.

☞ Even if they did not know, we do know today.

Clean and unclean foods

Adventists are trying to keep the so called sanitary reform, which, according to them, has its basis in the Bible, where there's a distinction made between clean and unclean foods.

Here is also a case of prefigurative meaning of distinguishing foods and of isolating Israelites from the influence of pagan religions in the time when Israel was still "not of age" (Gal 4:1).

Jesus Christ says:

Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will teach you all the truth.

Jn 16:12-13

This introduction to the full truth can be seen with regard to this problem. Saint Peter, even after the Ascension of the Lord, still did not understand the connections, but the Spirit of truth, through the vision in Joppa (Acts 10:1n), led him to know the meaning of the rules of clean and unclean foods.

The Scripture testifies in many places that the distinguishing of foods between clean and unclean has no basis in the New Testament. Let us see at least some.

A man of sound faith knows he can eat anything, while one who is weak in faith eats only vegetables.

Rom 14:2

I know and am confident in the Lord Jesus that nothing is of itself unclean; but to him who regards anything as unclean, to him it is unclean... For the kingdom of God does not consist in food and drink, but in justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rom 14:14,17

Now food does not commend us to God. For neither shall we suffer any loss if we do not eat, nor if we do eat shall we have any advantage.

1 Cor 8:8

Anything that is sold in the market, eat, asking no question for conscience sake... If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat whatever is set before you...

1 Cor 10:25,27

The little horn

Adventists like very much to explain biblical prophecies with great enthusiasm, self-confidence, and infallibly. They do not respect the Bible, which states:

This, then, you must understand first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation.

2 Pt 1:20

In these epistles (Paul's) there are certain things difficult to understand, which the unlearned and the unstable distort, just as they do the rest of the Scriptures also, to their own destruction.

2 Pt 3:16

I want to mention only one thing here. I was frequently told, that the Bible (Book of Daniel) talks of the so called "little horn", which would change times. It was insisted, that the "little horn", which is mentioned there, is the Catholic Church, and first of all, the papacy. By "change times", it is taken to mean the change from Saturday to Sunday.

So I took the Holy Scripture and looked at that spot:

After this, I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong;... it had ten horns... there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots;... As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the visions of my head alarmed me. I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made known to me the interpretation of the things... As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time.

Dn 7:7-25

My brothers, Adventists, I find that you cite the Bible incorrectly. This is further substantiated by your most official, previously mentioned book, which states: "Through the prophecy of Daniel 7 God revealed His foreknowledge of the change of the day of worship" (SDAB 260). "...little-horn power changed the Sabbath" (SDAB p. 262).

The Scripture does not say, the little horn "shall change the times," but only that it "shall think to change the times". It is the same difference as between "thinking

to buy a Mercedes" and "having one parked in one's own garage". If in spite of this, you still want to quote the Bible incorrectly, then don't try to persuade yourselves that you have a love for the truth.

As you insist that the "little horn" is the Catholic Church with the Pope at Her head, then tell me when did the Catholic Church ever speak "words against the Most High"? If you say it is the deeds, that would also be against the Bible, because it is written "he shall **speak words**".

How is it possible that you do not apply that prophecy to communism or other governments which spoke and still speak unheard of things against the Most High and try to abolish the Lord's day?! Moreover, how can you be so sure that under the change of "times", it is meant change of Saturday to Sunday and not for example, change of Christian times? And what if the Anti-Christ will try to change Sunday to Saturday?

You state, brothers, that papacy is the beast with the number 666, which is referred to in the Apocalypse (13:18) and are trying to prove it in all way possible.

I have no qualms about the fact that this is not true, but that it is an unheard of blindness and pride on the part of the ones who "**infallibly**" **state** that.

If according to you this should be true, which of the Popes, do you state is the beast? There were 264 of them to date.

All of them?

If all of them, then even the first Pope, the Apostle Peter, would also have to be the beast. It seems that even Jesus Himself agrees with you when saying, "*Get behind me, Satan!*" (Mt 16:23)

If, I am repeating, purely theoretically, if you were

right, even here, the Bible proves your error.

Jesus Christ said these words to Peter right after he promised him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Surely, you don't doubt Jesus knew that after the words, "*You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,*" he would tell him the hard word "Satan". Did He not say that word for your benefit, to make you understand that the spreading of His truth is not dependent on our, neither your, "sinlessness" but solely on His power? Don't you know that He is almighty and can do things in such a way as is pleasing to Him and not how we perceive it? That not only is He capable of creating the Universe, but He can also build His infallible Church on a fragile man and fragile people?

Was pride not the first sin against God?

And so the only remedy is humility, to accept things as God Himself arranged them, to listen to the two-thousand year old Church, because only that can be the Christ's Church, to listen, be taught (Is 2:3) by the Church founded on Peter and weak people, which, nevertheless, is the pillar and foundation of Truth.

Maybe, you are not able to accept all that has been said here. I am not surprised by that, because I know faith is, in the first place, God's grace.

God gives everyone in the world grace for prayer, so that man can ask and consequently obtain graces in order to be saved.

And thus, if you are able to say to God at least this, "God, show me where the truth is. Show me if I am mistaken. Help me to follow the truth, wherever it may be found," — in that case we are already on one ship.



Don Bosco had a vision of the Church in the last days with the Eucharist on a large pillar and the Virgin Mary on a smaller pillar. From ages past, the Church has been symbolized by a ship. The Pope (pictured on the front) steers the ship away from danger. He represents Peter, the first Pope to whom Jesus made the following solemn promise: *"You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Mt 16:18)

Among the Christian churches which are based on the free study of the Bible is the well known and rapidly growing church of Seventh-day Adventists. The author of this book considered as providence his own acquaintance with an Adventist fellow student during his University studies. Many discussions and letters followed, and consequently a book was born.

This book is written in an easy-to-read dialogue style. A Catholic will discover what the Seventh-day Adventists teach while a Seventh-day Adventist will find out what the Catholics believe. For the purpose of finding the truth, both faiths are examined and compared in the light of holy Scripture.

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